Stories of the Babylonian Talmud

Jeffrey L. Rubenstein

VISIT…

Stories of the Babylonian Talmud

Also by the Author

Talmudic Stories:
Narrative Art, Composition, and Culture

The Culture of the Babylonian Talmud

Stories of the Babylonian Talmud

Jeffrey L. Rubenstein

The Johns Hopkins University Press
Baltimore

© 2010 The Johns Hopkins University Press
All rights reserved. Published 2010
Printed in the United States of America on acid-free paper
2 4 6 8 9 7 5 3 1

The Johns Hopkins University Press
2715 North Charles Street
Baltimore, Maryland 21218-4363
www.press.jhu.edu

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data
Rubenstein, Jeffrey L.
Stories of the Babylonian Talmud / Jeffrey L. Rubenstein.
p. cm.
Includes bibliographical references and index.
ISBN-13: 978-0-8018-9449-7 (hardcover : alk. paper)
ISBN-10: 0-8018-9449-2 (hardcover : alk. paper)
1. Aggada—History and criticism. 2. Narration in rabbinical literature.
3. Talmud—Criticism, textual. 4. Rabbinical literature—Translations into English. I. Title.
BM516.5.R82 2010
296.1'27606—dc22
2009033016

A catalog record for this book is available from the British Library.

Special discounts are available for bulk purchases of this book. For more information, please contact Special Sales at 410-516-6936 or specialsales@press.jhu.edu.

The Johns Hopkins University Press uses environmentally friendly book materials, including recycled text paper that is composed of at least 30 percent post-consumer waste, whenever possible. All of our book papers are acid-free, and our jackets and covers are printed on paper with recycled content.

In memory of my grandparents

Montague Rubenstein (1903–1972)

Isabel Rubenstein (1908–1979)

Phillip Hack (1900–1982)

Sylvia Hack (1906–1985)

יהא זכרם ברוך

May their memory be for a blessing

This page intentionally left blank

Contents

Preface and Acknowledgments ix
Abbreviations and Conventions xiii
Tractates xvii

Chapter 1
Introduction 1

Chapter 2
The Shaming of Abdan (Yevamot 105b) 21

Chapter 3
Ilfa's Desperate Challenge (Taanit 21a) 41

Chapter 4
Honi's Long Sleep (Taanit 23a) 62

Chapter 5
R. Tsadoq's Firstling: Genesis of a Talmudic Story (Berakhot 27b–28a, Bekhorot 36a) 77

Chapter 6
A Warning to Disciples: Manners and Mutilation (Hagigah 3a–b) 91

Chapter 7

A Warning to Masters: Rebuff and Rejection (Sotah 47a) 116

Chapter 8

Stammaitic Astrology (Shabbat 156b) 150

Chapter 9

Theodicy and Torah (Menahot 29b) 182

Chapter 10

Conclusion 203

Appendix: Texts in Hebrew and Aramaic 231

Notes 237

Selected Bibliography 295

General Index 303

Source Index 312

Preface and Acknowledgments

Stories of the Babylonian Talmud continues the project of my two previous books, *Talmudic Stories: Narrative Art, Composition, and Culture* (1999) and *The Culture of the Babylonian Talmud* (2003). In those works, I argued that the redactors of the Babylonian Talmud (Bavli), the Stammaim, made important contributions not only to Talmudic law but also to Talmudic narratives, creatively reworking the versions they had received from their predecessors. The identification of themes and motifs that appear consistently in these stories—themes and motifs largely absent from the earlier versions preserved in Palestinian sources—shed light on the leading concerns of Stammaitic culture. This book follows the structure of *Talmudic Stories*, by which each chapter is devoted to detailed analysis of a story through literary analysis combined with form-critical and source-critical methods. The book also focuses on the compositional processes of the stories, exploring and documenting the methods by which the Stammaim reworked their sources. And it continues the work of *The Culture of the Babylonian Talmud* in describing Stammaitic culture and the world of the late Babylonian rabbinic academy.

I began work on this book during a National Endowment for the Humanities fellowship awarded for the 2003–2004 academic year, and I am grateful to the NEH for their support. I am also grateful for a sabbatical leave generously granted by New York University for the 2007–2008 academic year. The Skirball Department of Hebrew and Judaic Studies continues to be a fertile environment in which to study and teach, where I have been surrounded by outstanding colleagues and students, whom I thank for their encouragement and support. I thank Lawrence Schiffman, chairman of the department, for his excellent leadership and guidance. I would also like to thank Matthew Santirocco, dean of the College of Arts and Sciences,

Catherine Stimpson, dean of the Graduate School of Arts and Science, and Edward Sullivan, dean of the Humanities, for their unstinting support of scholarship.

It is a pleasure to acknowledge teachers and colleagues who have contributed to my education and thinking and who share credit for whatever is of virtue in this book. My teachers David Weiss Halivni and Shamma Friedman, whose scholarship and methodological innovations are the basis for this work, gave generously of their time and wisdom. They patiently listened to my suggestions even when their views differed from my own. I thank them for continually supporting my research and encouraging me to pursue my ideas.

I would like to thank the following colleagues for reading individual chapters and providing me important insights, comments, and criticisms: Aharon Amit, Adam Becker, David Brodsky, Yaakov Elman, Isaiah Gafni, Martin Jaffee, Jonathan Klawans, Jay Rovner, Michael Satlow, Jonathan Schofer, Seth Schwartz, Alexei Sivertsev. I am grateful to Christine Hayes for reading the entire manuscript on behalf of the Johns Hopkins University Press and for offering many helpful comments. I am extremely grateful to Anne Whitmore, a senior manuscript editor at the press, for her meticulous editing and for guiding the process of publication to completion.

Earlier versions of two chapters appeared in the following publications, and I thank the editors for permission to reprint and revise them: "Talmudic Astrology: Bavli Shabbat 156a–b," *Hebrew Union College Annual* 78 (2007) (= Chapter 8); "The Shaming of Abdan," *Torah Lishma: Essays in Jewish Studies in Honor of Professor Shamma Friedman*, ed. David Golinkin et al. (Jerusalem: Bar Ilan University Press and the Jewish Theological Seminary, 2007), xx–xlvi (= Chapter 2).

I am grateful to my family, relatives, and friends for their unflagging support: Arthur, Denise, Errol, Evelyn, Milton, Ronald, Miriam, Shulie, Dan, Rena, Jeff, Talia, Yaron, Sarah, Tracey, Ivor, Maureen, and even Ezra.

My wife, Mishaela, has been a constant source of love and devotion, as have my children, Ayelet, Maya, Adam, and Noah. Thank you for reminding me of what truly counts in life and the importance of keeping perspective.

This book is dedicated to the memory of my grandparents: Monty (Montague) and Isabel Rubenstein, and Phillip and Sylvia Hack. Monty arrived in South Africa from Warsaw in 1918, fleeing the Polish army and

famine; Phillip was brought from Lithuania to South Africa as a newborn in 1900. Isabel Nathanson and Sylvia Noviss were both born in South Africa, in Johannesburg and Oudtshoorn respectively, their parents having emigrated from Lithuania in the 1890s. I remember my grandparents as being devoted to their faith, dedicated to their extended families, extremely gentle, kind, and loving, and always ready to entertain their grandchildren with stories. They flourished in the South African Jewish community for most of the twentieth century. Their children and grandchildren dispersed to the United States, Canada, England, and Israel—a true diaspora tale. May their memory be for a blessing.

This page intentionally left blank

Abbreviations and Conventions

Complete bibliographic information for the editions listed below appears in the Selected Bibliography.

References to rabbinic texts provide the page numbers of the editions used in parentheses following the citation. Thus *SifDeut* #306 (309) = *Sifre* to Deuteronomy, paragraph 306, p. 309 in Finkelstein's edition.

All translations of rabbinic texts are my own unless otherwise indicated. Translations of biblical passages are from the New Jewish Publication Society translation, although I have freely modified them when needed.

Hebrew transliteration is phonetic: q = ק, kh = כ, ts = צ, h = ח. I have not differentiated א from ע, ה from ח, or ס from ש except when a philological point is at issue. The *dagesh* is generally not represented.

Names are rendered phonetically except for those with common English equivalents, such as Moses, Akiba, Jesus, and Joshua b. Perahia.

The Hebrew or Aramaic texts of the story analyzed in each chapter are provided in an appendix to the book. Given the absence of critical editions for almost all Talmud tractates, I have adopted the "diplomatic" editorial approach: I have selected one manuscript as the base text, discussed variant readings where relevant, and listed significant variants in an appendix at the end of each chapter. Manuscript sigla follow Sokoloff, *DJBA*, 55–59.

AJSR	*AJS [Association of Jewish Studies] Review*
ANRW	*Aufstieg und Niedergang der Römischen Welt*
ARNA	*Avot derabbi natan*, version A (ed. S. Schechter)
ARNB	*Avot derabbi natan*, version B (ed. S. Schechter)
b	Bavli (Babylonian Talmud)
b.	ben, bar (= son of)
BT	Babylonian Talmud

CBT	*The Culture of the Babylonian Talmud* (Rubenstein)
DeutR	*Deuteronomy Rabbah* (= *Midrash devarim rabbah*, ed. Lieberman)
DJBA	*A Dictionary of Jewish Babylonian Aramaic* (Sokoloff)
DJPA	*A Dictionary of Jewish Palestinian Aramaic* (Sokoloff)
DQS	*Diqduqei sofrim*, ed. Rabbinovicz. For *Seder Nashim*, ed. Liss
GenR	*Genesis Rabbah* (= *Midrash bereshit rabba*, ed. J. Theodor and H. Albeck)
HUCA	*Hebrew Union College Annual*
JBL	*Journal of Biblical Literature*
JJS	*Journal of Jewish Studies*
JNES	*Journal of Near Eastern Studies*
JPS	*Jewish Publication Society*
JQR	*Jewish Quarterly Review*
JSJ	*Journal for the Study of Judaism*
JTS	*Journal of Theological Studies*
LevR	*Leviticus Rabbah* (= *Midrash vayiqra rabba*, ed. Margulies)
m	Mishna
Maharsha	Talmudic commentary of Samuel Edels (1555–1631)
Maharzu	Commentary of Zev Wolf Einhorn
Mekh	*Mekhilta d'Rabbi Ishmael* (ed. Horowitz and Rabin)
MekhRSBY	*Mekhilta d'Rabbi Shimon bar Yohai* (ed. Epstein and Melamed)
MGWJ	*Monatsschrift für Geschichte und Wissenschaft des Judentums*
MidTan	*Midrash Tannaim* (ed. Hoffman)
MLH	*Mavo lenusah hamishnah* (Epstein)
MM	*Meqorot umesorot* (Halivni)
ms, mss	manuscript(s)
Ms M	Manuscript Munich 95
NumR	*Numbers Rabbah*
PR	*Midrash Pesiqta Rabbati* (ed. Ish-Shalom)
PRK	*Pesiqta deRav Kahana* (ed. Mandelbaum)
OGP	*Otsar HaGeonim Perushim* (ed. Lewin)
OGT	*Otsar HaGeonim Teshuvot* (ed. Lewin)
PAAJR	*Proceedings of the American Academy of Jewish Research*
PT	Palestinian Talmud (Yerushalmi)
Qoh	*Qoheleth* (Ecclesiastes)
R.	Rabbi
REJ	*Revue des Études Juives*
RuthR	*Ruth Rabbah* (ed. Lerner)

SifDeut	*Sifre* to Deuteronomy (ed. Finkelstein)
SifNum	*Sifre* to Numbers (ed. Horovitz)
t	Tosefta
Tan	*Midrash Tanhuma*
TanB	*Midrash Tanhuma*, ed. Buber
TK	*Tosefta Ki-fshuta* (Lieberman)
TS	*Talmudic Stories: Narrative Art, Composition, and Culture* (Rubenstein)
var	variant reading
y	Yerushalmi (Palestinian Talmud), according to the edition published by the Academy of the Hebrew Language (Jerusalem, 2001).

This page intentionally left blank

Tractates

References to tractates are preceded by b (= Babylonian Talmud), y (= Yerushalmi or Palestinian Talmud), t (= Tosefta) or m (= Mishna). Thus bNaz 35a refers to Babylonian Talmud, Tractate Nazir, folio 35a. tBer 6:5 refers to Tosefta, Tractate Berakhot, chapter 6, paragraph 5. Pages for the Yerushalmi, where provided, refer to the edition published by the Academy of the Hebrew Language (Jerusalem, 2001).

Arakh	Arakhin	Men	Menahot
AZ	Avoda Zara	MQ	Moed Qatan
BB	Bava Batra	Naz	Nazir
Bekh	Bekhorot	Ned	Nedarim
Ber	Berakhot	Nid	Nidda
Bes	Besa	Par	Parah
BM	Bava Metsia	Pe	Pe'a
BQ	Bava Qama	Pes	Pesahim
Dem	Demai	Qid	Qiddushin
Ed	Eduyot	RH	Rosh Hashana
Eruv	Eruvin	Sanh	Sanhedrin
Git	Gittin	Shab	Shabbat
Hag	Hagiga	Shev	Sheviit
Hal	Halla	Shevu	Shevuot
Hor	Horayot	Sot	Sotah
Hul	Hullin	Suk	Sukka
Kel	Kelim	Ta	Ta'anit
Ket	Ketubot	Yad	Yadayim
Makh	Makhshirin	Yev	Yevamot
Me	Meila	Yom	Yoma
Meg	Megilla	Zev	Zevahim

This page intentionally left blank

Stories of the Babylonian Talmud

This page intentionally left blank

Chapter 1

Introduction

Prelude

R. Abbahu and R. Hiyya b. Abba came to a certain place. R. Abbahu expounded homiletical instruction (*aggadeta*). R. Hiyya b. Abba expounded legal traditions (*shematata*). Everyone left R. Hiyya b. Abba and went to [hear] R. Abbahu. He [R. Hiyya b. Abba] became depressed. He [R. Abbahu] said to him, "I will tell you a parable. To what can this matter be compared? To two men, one selling precious stones and one selling kinds of small ware. To whom do people rush? Not to the one selling kinds of small ware?" (bSot 40a)

We can all sympathize with poor R. Hiyya b. Abba. He went forth with the best of intentions, aspiring to teach the local villagers some points of halakha, of Jewish law, which he considered to be the heart and soul of Judaism. At first he must have felt gratified to have attracted an audience and enthusiastically set about his task, drawing from his vast knowledge of rabbinic legal tradition to instruct his listeners on performing the commandments and observing a life of piety. How disappointed he must have felt to see them all slip away in order to be entertained by a colleague preaching aggada—stories and homilies, biblical interpretations and parables, lore and legend, matters that R. Hiyya b. Abba considered of lesser consequence. Anyone who has dedicated his life to a transcendent value and selflessly struggled to communicate it to others only to experience a lack of interest can readily understand R. Hiyya b. Abba's depression. I picture him standing there at the town square, where a little while earlier his hopes had mounted as the crowd swelled, now alone, abandoned, dejected.

Flush from the success of his well-attended discourse, R. Abbahu tries to console his forlorn colleague. He can afford some generosity of spirit after capturing and captivating his unfortunate partner's audience, and so offers a flattering parable: R. Hiyya b. Abba's subject, he concedes, is of great significance and worth, like precious gems. But commoners prefer the trinkets and cheap products they can afford. Paradoxically, his colleague's failure indicates not the inferior quality of the material, but the opposite, its great value. Bring expensive commodities of the highest quality to a market frequented by destitute people and you will find no takers, through no fault of your own. The Talmudic passage concludes that R. Abbahu also showed R. Hiyya great honor by an attempt to hearten his friend, but neither his words nor his gestures brought any consolation. Apparently he was a better homilist than comforter, a more effective pedagogue of commoners than counselor to his rabbinic colleagues.

The Talmud does not explain exactly why R. Hiyya b. Abba found no relief at his associate's kind efforts. While it is possible that his experience was so upsetting as to require some time to recover, or that the gesture seemed hollow coming from the very source of the insult, there may be more than meets the eye. Did he sense that his colleague's words were ironic or meant tongue-in-cheek? Perhaps he felt the rhetorical question concluding the parable was tinged with ambiguity and could be taken as a definitive statement, implying that he was the one with the cheap goods. Change the question mark to an exclamation point, the inflection and tone of the pronunciation from rising in pitch to flat, and the meaning reverses. Or perhaps the parable struck him as imprecise—there is always a gap between a parable (*mashal*) and its decoding (*nimshal*). The rabbis, after all, were not "selling" anything but offering *gratis*, and we should expect that the people would have helped themselves to the most precious items first. There is also some irony in the fact that R. Abbahu attempts to cheer up his friend with a parable, a type of aggada, the same mode of material that caused the problem. To be placated by an aggadic parable could be seen as tacit admission of the attractiveness of the rival type of discourse.

Shifting the frame of reference from the characters to the storytellers raises additional questions. The source itself is aggadic, so we have an aggadic source providing perspectives on the relative worth of halakha and aggada. Such self-referential texts can be tricky; indeed, we can ask about the unnamed storytellers questions similar to those raised above about our two rabbis. Did the storytellers intend the story ironically, praising and buttering up their more law-centered colleagues while simultaneously celebrating the popularity of aggada in a somewhat triumphalist manner? Did they

deliberately formulate an ambiguous final line such that the source could be read in two ways, with a kind of hidden meaning shared by those in the know? Or is the story a lighthearted admonition to an intended audience of rigid legalists, cautioning them that, however meritorious the study of law, they should not neglect lore, if only because of their less sophisticated coreligionists?

We might also ask about the purposes of the Talmudic redactors—assuming for the moment that they were not identical to the storytellers but incorporated an earlier source into the Babylonian Talmud—for the Talmud, though containing a great deal of aggada, is predominantly a halakhic text, organized according to the framework of an even more dominantly halakhic code, the Mishna. Perhaps the redactors included the story as a type of self-justification, to explain why they integrated so much aggada into their Talmud—much more, on a relative basis, than the redactors of the Yerushalmi introduced. Yes, they wish to say, we rabbis know halakha is the most important pursuit, but let us not forget the popular audience with whom we have occasion to interact. Yes, our Talmud is chock full of the most complex and intricate legal argumentation, but we should not neglect to master aggada as well, lest we wind up as depressed as R. Hiyya b. Abba. We might also wonder why they redacted this story in this context in Tractate Sotah when they could have chosen any number of locations.

Let us momentarily leave R. Hiyya b. Abba to his melancholic wallowing and consider another story that reflects a similar tension between halakha and aggada.

> R. Ami and R. Asi were sitting before R. Yitshaq Napha. One said to him, "Let the master tell us some legal traditions (*shematata*)!" And the other said, "Let the master tell us some homiletical discourses (*aggadeta*)!" He began to speak homiletical discourses, but the one would not leave him be [*shaviq*]. He began to speak legal traditions, but the other would not leave him be [*shaviq*]. He said to them: "I will tell you a parable. To what can the matter be compared? To a man who has two wives, one a girl, the other an old woman. The girl plucks out his white [hair]. The old woman plucks out his dark [hair]. It turns out he becomes bald on both sides!" He [thereupon] said to them: "Since it is thus, I will tell you something that is agreeable to you both."[1]

The versatility of R. Yitshaq, apparently equally adept at lecturing on both halakha and aggada, ironically impedes his pedagogy. Two disciples, equally eager to learn from their revered master, cannot agree on the nature of their lesson, whether it should be law (halakha) or lore (aggada). The

students, apparently equally adept at insisting on their own way and obstructing the other's, constantly interrupt their master's attempts to speak. But the resourceful R. Yitshaq finds a way out of the impasse. He first offers his impatient students a self-reflective parable, entertaining them with the amusing scenario and causing them to rethink their deportment and temporarily cease their disruptions. When he subsequently promises to satisfy them both simultaneously, he is given room to speak. True to his word, the Talmudic passage continues with R. Yitshaq providing both a homiletical and legal exegesis of the same verse.

The parable of the henpecked husband depilated by his two assiduous wives gives the story a comic dimension, and we can well imagine that this humorous element was crucial in disarming the equally assiduous disciples. The concluding line of the parable, "bald on both sides," is actually a proverb of sorts. It appears in a different context in another Talmudic passage—in fact, a complicated legal discussion—of a husband who gives his property to his wife and is then sued by a creditor (bBB 132a). Now, had the wife not received the property as a gift, she would have been protected from its loss by virtue of her marriage contract (*ketuba*), to which the property is essentially pledged. But, according to one opinion, the gift of land postdates and takes precedence over the marriage contract, so the poor wife loses both her marriage contract and the gift, rendering her "bald on both sides." This is clearly a secondary reuse of the proverb in a figurative sense, which seems somewhat odd—applying baldness to a woman. But that the proverb equally serves legal and homiletical purposes should perhaps not surprise us, given R. Yitshaq's expertise in both areas. The entire parable, moreover, finds a stunning parallel in Aesop's fable of a middle-aged, half-gray man with two mistresses, one young and one old, who respectively pluck out his white and dark hair, leaving him completely bald.[2] In one form or another this parable circulated broadly throughout the Mediterranean world. That versatility of R. Yitshaq—or of the storytellers who composed the story about R. Yitshaq and attributed the parable to him—also manifests itself in the ability to draw traditions from elsewhere and redeploy them in new contexts.

Here too we could ask similar questions about the storyteller(s) and redactors as we asked above. Did they have a preference, like R. Ami and R. Asi, for instruction of a particular type? Or did they sympathize with the hero of the tale, R. Yitshaq, and perhaps consider both halakha and aggada equally worthy of study and mastery? That they depict a stalemate of sorts and indulge both requests would seem to indicate the latter. Indeed, the parity between the two, the dual answer, and the fact that both the source itself as well as the larger Talmudic passage in which it appears end up in-

tegrating halakha and aggada points to a more balanced attitude.[3] And the parable perhaps implies that single-minded devotion to either one empties the tradition of all substance and depletes the essence of Torah, much like the poor man without any hair. The storytellers, after all, could have told a different tale, with R. Yitshaq gratifying only one of his disciples, or even explicitly rebuking the other: "I should never turn to aggada (or halakha), a matter of no account, if even one pupil yearns to hear a word of halakha (or aggada), the essence of the divine revelation." Note that the names of the characters R. Ami and R. Asi have an almost identical spelling (and sound), differing in but one letter (and orthographically, at least in print, the letters *mem* and *samekh* look remarkably alike). Moreover, the storytellers do not recount which sage preferred which mode of discourse, perhaps suggesting that the storytellers considered such details unimportant because the two were of fundamentally equal worth. Can this inference then point us to the storytellers' purposes in telling the story and the redactors' goals in including it in their Talmud? That is, were they trying to instruct their audience in the merits of developing proficiency in both legal and homiletical traditions and the comparable status of the two?

The two stories contain a number of common features that invite comparison and contrast. Apart from the same tension between halakha and aggada, between legal traditions (*shematata*) and homiletical instruction (*aggadeta*), both stories involve an explanatory parable, and both use the verb "leave" (*shavaq*): the audience leaves R. Hiyya b. Abba (*shavqinhu*), while neither disciple of R. Yitshaq will "leave him be" (*shaviq*). The shifting use of the same verb points to an important difference in the core problem, namely that the first story tells of an insufficient audience while the second tells of a superabundant one, as it were. In the first story, two rabbinic teachers compete for a single audience, whereas in the second, two sages compete over a single teacher. Note that the first story involves rabbinic lectures to commoners or nonrabbis, whereas the second story deals with intrarabbinic instruction. In this respect, might the two stories be reflecting a deeply held rabbinic perception of a difference between rabbis and nonrabbis, that the former will never get enough while the latter pick and choose? There is also an interesting contrast in the parables: two male merchants in the first account's parable willingly offer their wares, whereas the two females of the second parable remove the husband's hair against his will. The first pulses with the running of the town square and marketplace, while the second evokes the more stationary postures of the schoolhouse. And the mental anguish of R. Hiyya b. Abba contrasts with the physical torment of the husband.

Yet the starkest contrast lies in the different moods that permeate the two

stories: the inconsolable depression of R. Hiyya b. Abba as opposed to the comic parable of R. Yitshaq and happy ending to the disagreement. Could this difference be a function of the different attitudes towards halakha and aggada of those two masters? We might provisionally consider R. Hiyya b. Abba to be a "separator" and R. Yitshaq a "unifier." R. Hiyya b. Abba set about lecturing on law in a single-minded and uncompromising fashion, and he would not or could not change his plans despite the demand for homiletical instruction. The outcome was disappointing. R. Yitshaq, on the other hand, combined halakha and aggada in the same discourse and satisfied all parties. If we are to derive some lesson from the didactic experiences of these sages, or from the two tales of the storytellers, it could be along these lines: that one must always bear in mind the mutual relationship and fundamental unity of halakha and aggada and be cautious of separating them into discrete entities.

Rabbinic sources themselves occasionally reflect on the interconnection between halakha and aggada. One tannaitic tradition claims that "words of Torah are all one, but they comprise Scripture (*miqra*), and oral tradition (*mishnah*), exegesis (*midrash*), laws (*halakhot*), and narratives (*haggadot*)," and continues "so too a disciple of the wise—you cannot know what his character is until he teaches oral tradition (*mishnah*), laws (*halakhot*), and narratives (*haggadot*)."[4] Torah, in other words, is a fundamentally unified body, though it expresses itself in different modes and genres. Consequently, the disciple who has truly mastered Torah will be capable of teaching Torah in all its various forms. A disciple who has confined his study to one form of learning—a specialist in law, for example, who knows few narratives—by definition lacks an essential component of Torah and should be recognized as having that deficiency.

The question of the interconnection of halakha and aggada, sometimes posed in terms of the relationship between law and narrative, has received much attention in succeeding centuries and to the present day.[5] Well known are the poetic words of Haim Nahman Bialik, that "a living *halachah* is an *aggadah* that has been or that will be. And the reverse is true also. The two are one in their beginning and end."[6] The Talmudic scholar Yaakov Sussman observes: "*halakha* and *aggada* are two sides of the same coin—a single conceptual world and a single literary corpus of the same sages—and it is impossible to separate them in any way."[7] And the legal scholar Robert Cover wrote in his celebrated essay "*Nomos* and Narrative":

> In this normative world, law and narrative are inseparably related. Every prescription is insistent in its demand to be located in discourse—to be supplied

> with history and destiny, beginning and end, explanation and purpose. And every narrative is insistent in its demand for its prescriptive point, its moral.[8]

Cover claims that law does not stand on its own as a self-justifying and independent enterprise but always depends on a narrative to explain its purpose, function, or origin, that is, to make it coherent.[9] This book too argues that the law and narratives of the Babylonian Talmud are deeply related, both in ways conceived of by these sources and authors and in other ways too. Most importantly, it claims that both are the products of the late Babylonian redactors, the Stammaim.

Background

This is the third book of a series devoted to the study of the stories of the Babylonian Talmud, or Bavli. It follows *Talmudic Stories: Narrative Art, Composition, and Culture* (1999) and *The Culture of the Babylonian Talmud* (2003). I will first summarize the argument of those books in light of the theoretical and methodological developments that preceded them; then I will discuss the present book and its contribution.

Talmudic Stories (*TS*) developed an approach to the study of Bavli stories that combined literary analysis with methods of academic Talmud scholarship such as source-criticism and form-criticism. The goal was to do justice to the dual nature of such stories, as sophisticated literary compositions, on the one hand, and as components of the Bavli, on the other. It drew on the two main methodological developments of the previous thirty years of Talmud scholarship, the first of which related to the genre of Talmudic stories and the second of which devolved from the new understanding of the nature of the editing or redaction of the Talmud.

Beginning in the 1970s, scholars shifted their understanding of the genre of Talmudic stories from historical testimonies to didactic fiction. Until that point the stories had been thought to contain reliable historical and biographical data about the characters, mainly the rabbis who feature as protagonists, upon which critical rabbinic biographies and history could be written. A wealth of studies, however, demonstrated that this approach was untenable: rabbinic storytellers changed, reworked, and shaped the sources they received, and also invented new ones, to accomplish their didactic goals. This shift brought with it a reorientation in focus from the characters to the storytellers, from attempts to get "behind" the text, so to speak, in order to uncover a putative historical reality, to efforts to take the story seriously as a whole and to understand the storyteller's interests in telling the

tale in a given manner. Moreover, as scholars began to approach the stories as literary wholes, they realized that the stories exhibited a sophisticated narrative art and numerous literary techniques known from the general study of fiction, including irony, paronomasia, threefold repetitions, keywords, symbolic names, and so forth. The prevalence of such devices helped establish the genre as didactic fiction and confirmed the indispensability of a literary method in Talmudic exegesis. In principle, a variety of literary methods can be applied to Talmudic stories, just as a critic can choose from an assortment of methods for analyzing any fictional text. In *Talmudic Stories* I argued that an important first step was a "close reading" in the fashion of the New Criticism; indeed, a close reading is generally a component of all contemporary literary methods.[10] Each of the six chapters of *TS* analyzed a Bavli story, illustrating the literary art of the storytellers and identifying the principal themes and concerns.

Yet the stories of the Bavli are an integral part of the Babylonian Talmud. And the Talmud itself almost never distinguishes narrative from legal discussion, story from law, aggada from halakha. While the Talmud, as we have seen, has terms for various types of material, such as *halakha* (law), *aggadeta/aggadda* (nonlegal traditions), *shaqla ve-tarya* (give-and-take, i.e., dialectical argumentation), *shematata* (legal traditions), and more, it almost never identifies its own internal genres or designates them with one of these terms. The story of R. Yitshaq Napha discussed above is a rare example of such a case, and yet even there the halakhic and aggadic components of the story interface smoothly, and the entire aggadic story blends almost seamlessly into the halakhic concerns of the greater discussion.[11] Diverse genres and modes of discourse—which we identify and differentiate for our own purposes—interweave throughout the Talmudic text, which regularly moves effortlessly from one to the other and back. Though perhaps bordering on a tautology, this observation has significant implications. It means that the same critical approaches that scholars use to analyze the legal passages of the Talmud should be used to study stories. These approaches, which include source-criticism, form-criticism, and redaction-criticism, allow us to identify the components of a Talmudic passage and trace its development and integration. We should, in other words, be scholarly "unifiers," in the manner of R. Yitshaq, and not "separators," such as R. Hiyya b. Abba.

Most important, we should consider the same redactors who composed the legal passages of the Talmud to be responsible for the stories and aggadic portions as well. At the heart of academic Talmud study lies a Kuhnian paradigm shift—the theory of the post-Amoraic or Stammaitic redaction—that underpins the most fruitful research of the past three decades. Earlier

scholars, influenced by medieval traditions and interpretations of Talmudic passages, attributed the redaction of the Talmud to the late Amoraim Rav Ashi (d. 427) and Ravina (d. 500). Following the pioneering research of David Weiss Halivni and Shamma Friedman, contemporary scholarship now assigns the redaction or editing to a later period, circa 500–700 CE, and to a group of anonymous sages known as "Stammaim," named for the Hebrew term for anonymous, *stam*. The Stammaim are the true authors of the Bavli, for they fashioned the *sugyot* or literary units that comprise the text of the Talmud, weaving the Amoraic traditions transmitted to them by their predecessors into new structures of their own creation. In particular, they added dialectical argumentation to the brief, apodictic Amoraic traditions they received. Comparing parallel passages in the Yerushalmi and Bavli, one often finds that the attributed traditions are similar but the anonymous sections differ greatly and have been significantly expanded in the Bavli. The Stammaim, it might be said, gave the Bavli its distinct character, made it "Talmudic"—in the dictionary sense of being characterized by dialectical argumentation, intricate discussions, subtle logic, and fine distinctions. Consequently, an indispensable part of the analysis of Talmudic *sugyot* in contemporary academic study is the separation of the anonymous components from attributed ones, that is, the Amoraic from the Stammaitic strata. This process allows the scholar to understand how earlier traditions were reworked by the Stammaitic redactors in new and unprecedented ways, and thereby to discern legal, conceptual, and historical change.

Talmudic Stories argued that the Stammaim, the redactors of the Talmud who created, and essentially authored, its legal passages, were also responsible for its stories. In other words, the Stammaim composed Talmudic stories mainly by reworking earlier narrative sources in much the same manner as they composed legal *sugyot* by reworking earlier legal statements. Because the Talmud generally does not distinguish its own internal materials, scholars have no reason to separate stories (or other aggadic traditions) from halakhic passages nor to posit that a distinct authorship and editing process created them. Stories, therefore, (and midrashic compilations, exegetical narratives, and other materials) should be analyzed with the same methods as legal passages and with similar efforts to distinguish the Amoraic from Stammaitic strata—what we might call a "unified theory" of the redaction of the Talmud.[12] That the Stammaim—who so profoundly changed the legal traditions they received and so thoroughly edited their sources to create the distinct texture of the Bavli—should have left narrative materials unchanged struck me as completely untenable.

Now, one difficulty in applying source- and form-critical methods to sto-

ries is that the characteristic distinction between attributed and anonymous material is less clear than in the legal material. Legal passages are typically composed of attributed Amoraic dicta, generally brief and often in Hebrew, and anonymous dialectical commentary, typically lengthy and in Aramaic. These forms provide the primary, and relatively straightforward, means of distinguishing Amoraic from Stammaitic strata in legal *sugyot*. Stories, however, are not usually composed of these two forms of material. Therefore, it is more difficult to distinguish the layers and discern the contours of Stammaitic reworking in the narrative material. Nevertheless, many tools are still available to identify the two layers. Chief among these is identifying the borrowing and transfer of passages from elsewhere in the Bavli, another technique commonly attested in legal materials. The Stammaim routinely transferred relevant sources in their reworking of legal passages; in some extreme cases they copied lengthy sequences of argumentation verbatim from one *sugya* to another. The same phenomenon obtains with stories, where it can be seen that a phrase, sentence, or extended passage has been borrowed from its primary context and adapted to another story. A second helpful technique is the comparison with earlier versions of a story, especially those extant in the Yerushalmi. As with legal passages, the Stammaim often received stories in forms that resembled those of the Yerushalmi and reworked them in significant ways.

Nor should we discount entirely the applicability to stories of those standard methods of distinguishing the layers of legal *sugyot*. In some stories we find abrupt shifts from Hebrew to Aramaic where later storytellers have added glosses to the sources they received.[13] Likewise, there are instances in which attributed Amoraic dicta incorporated within stories have been supplemented with lengthier elaborations.[14] In his methodological introduction to his commentary on the Tenth Chapter of Tractate Yevamot, Shamma Friedman proposed fifteen techniques for separating the Amoraic and post-Amoraic strata of *sugyot*. I have argued that almost all of these are attested in narrative materials too, and—although they are perhaps found less frequently—can be used in many cases to identify the layers.[15]

To put this in the most straightforward terms: *Talmudic Stories* argued that the hypothesis—the compelling presumption that we attribute stories to the author-redactors of the legal passages of the Bavli, that is, to the Stammaim—was supported by the evidence—that close study of Bavli stories revealed methods and techniques of composition akin to those exhibited in legal *sugyot*. In six detailed studies of some of the longer Bavli stories, I attempted to describe the processes by which the Bavli versions of those

stories had been reworked and to demonstrate that these indeed paralleled those processes known from scholarship on legal *sugyot*.

The dual approaches of literary analysis, which seeks to interpret the story as a literary whole, and methods of academic Talmudic criticism, which attempt to discern the components of the passage and understand its historical development, mutually reinforce each other. In most cases the themes and principal concerns of a story uncovered through close reading proved to be those very themes and motifs added or expanded by the redactors. This content was typically absent or marginal in the earlier versions attested in the Yerushalmi or in Palestinian midrashic compilations. In many cases the themes were borrowed from other Bavli passages and adapted to the story at hand. The confluence of literary and source-criticism, of synchronic and diachronic analyses, underscores the utility of the dual approach and supports the conclusion that the stories should be attributed to the Stammaim.

An important advantage of recognizing the "authorship" of Bavli stories is the concomitant identification of a historical context in which to situate them.[16] The Bavli contains traditions attributed to hundreds of sages and materials of many genres and provenances that date from about 200–700 CE. These wide ranges make it very difficult to provide any sort of context in which to interpret the stories. That some stories are attributed to named Amoraim provides little help, as the attributions are often unreliable, and in any case the stories were reworked by later sages. Moreover, many stories are unattributed, depriving us of even this problematic tool. Yet all literature exists within a historical context that is indispensable to its interpretation.[17] Clearly, it makes a difference if a story should be situated in the second century as opposed to the sixth (to say nothing of the tenth or seventeenth for that matter). To view the stories in their extant, reworked forms as the work of the Stammaim places them in a more limited historical context, namely 500–700 CE, and locates them in a specific cultural context, to which I now turn.

The Culture of the Babylonian Talmud

The identification of motifs that surface in Bavli stories but were largely absent from earlier Palestinian versions revealed a consistent set of themes that cut across numerous stories. Time and again, the same themes and motifs featured prominently in Bavli stories but not in their counterparts in Palestinian sources. These motifs certainly point to differences between Babylonian and Palestinian rabbinic culture. We would expect some dispari-

ties, due to the influence of the ambient Iranian Zoroastrian environment in the former case and to Roman pagan and, later, Christian culture in the latter. Yet, the leading exemplars of the stories in which these distinctive Bavli motifs appear are demonstrably late, that is, Stammaitic. There are specific reasons besides the evidence from the compositional and reworking processes to date these stories to post-Amoraic times.[18] These motifs thus reflect the distinctive culture of the Stammaim and open a window into their values, struggles, and concerns.

In *The Culture of the Babylonian Talmud* I attempted to describe aspects of this late, Stammaitic rabbinic culture. First and foremost, it was a scholastic, academic culture. Bavli stories often take place in the academy and focus on academic concerns, such as its leadership, protocols, etiquette, and conflicts. The parallel Palestinian sources, by contrast, tend to take place in a school or private house or lack any specific location. The Stammaitic academy was a highly structured, hierarchical institution. Students were arrayed in rows according to their status, the best students in the front, the more inferior students in the rear. Atop the hierarchy was its leader, the "head of the academy" (*rosh yeshiva/reish metivta*). Status was mainly a function of academic ability, namely mastery of Torah, and the head of the academy was in theory the most accomplished scholar. But in practice, genealogical status (*yihus*), an extremely significant concern of Sassanian culture, also contributed to academic standing. Therefore, the position of head of the academy, and perhaps other high offices in the academic hierarchy too, depended on a combination of proficiency in Torah and illustrious ancestry. Several stories, in fact, contest the relative importance of genealogy and competence in Torah in determining academic status. Indeed, this question appears to have been the cause of a great deal of conflict in Stammaitic times. A few passages even hint that the position of head of the academy exhibited some dynastic tendencies, as in later, Geonic times.

Dialectical ability—the capacity to excel in argumentation, to propound questions (*qushiot*) and parry objections (*tirutsei*, *peirukei*) raised by other sages—was considered the highest form of Torah. The self-consciousness of the Stammaim was that of living in a postclassical age. They felt unworthy of engaging in the production of traditions in the same manner as their Amoraic predecessors, who preserved attributed statements (*meimrot*) and formulated legislation (*hora'a*). Instead, they devoted themselves to the analysis and explication of the sources they had received, attempting to reconstruct the reasoning behind earlier rulings and understand the rationale underpinning Amoraic debates. This explication was needed, for in previous eras, only the conclusions, the final rulings and adjudicated laws, were

formulated in an official manner for transmission to succeeding generations.[19] The oral milieu required that traditions be memorized in order to be preserved; hence, only the essentials, the final decisions and conclusions, were transmitted. As a result, by the end of the Amoraic period much of the argumentation had been lost or was remembered in only fragmentary form, leaving the void that the Stammaim set themselves about filling. The preoccupation and concentration on argumentation, the constant engagement in the enterprise, in turn led the Stammaim to value dialectics as the highest form of Torah.

The high estimation of dialectical ability embodied a significant shift in values from earlier times. Tannaim and Amoraim considered argumentation a means to an end, not an enterprise for its own sake, and few examples of their dialectical interchanges appear in our sources. Dialectics was by no means the invention of the Stammaim. Their innovation, rather, was to value dialectics as an end in itself and to celebrate such activity as the most exalted form of Torah, the true measure of a sage's mastery. This shift in values is evidenced by the nature of the argumentation in the Stammaitic stratum. Only there do we find concerted efforts to justify minority and discredited opinions with no bearing on practical law. There too appear sequences of dialectical interchanges that are demonstrably artificial, formulated purely for literary or rhetorical purposes, such as to create symmetry or to provide three arguments for each side.[20] Likewise, contrived arguments appear that add little to the discussion but provide for balance in the structure of the *sugya*. Spurious questions and forced answers intended to underscore aspects of the disagreement are also attested.[21]

A number of Bavli stories describe sages propounding twelve or twenty-four objections to a colleague in the course of debate and responding with large numbers of solutions when questioned. These and other sources, albeit hyperbolic, suggest that intense, fast-paced interchanges characterized the Stammaitic academy. To succeed, a sage had to be able to think quickly and keep his composure while meeting every question with a better answer, for the academy was fundamentally a competitive place. By demonstrating the capacity to trot out numerous objections and responses of high quality, a sage manifested his ability in Torah and earned status, including a seat in the first rows. Failing to meet objections concomitantly entailed the loss of status and potential relegation to an inferior position in the hierarchy.

Because of the prevailing competitive atmosphere, the sages seem to have experienced the academy as an agonistic environment. Imagery of violence, hostility, and bloodshed is common, as the objections directed at a sage could feel like assaults on his very person. In oral debate, nothing

mediates between the two opposing parties, hence "attacking" questions and vicious responses aimed directly at a sage, though verbal, were perceived as a type of violence. To sally forth into the give-and-take of debate was not unlike a venture into (oral) battle, and a sage had to be on guard against (verbal) assaults flying at him from all directions. According to one telling source, a sage whose colleague had no answer to his cogent objection boasted, "I have cut off the legs of that child."[22]

The impact of such verbal attacks played out on the emotional-psychological plane, potentially causing embarrassment and humiliation, a terrible experience in the honor-and-shame culture of the times. In an academy populated by numerous sages, to fail to answer an objection raised by a fellow rabbi meant public humiliation. The entire assembly could witness that sage's ineptitude and lack of knowledge. Moreover, since status within the academy depended to some extent on ability, to be defeated in debate could also entail demotion within the academic hierarchy and additional humiliation. By succeeding in dialectical debate a sage gained honor and higher rank; by failing he suffered humiliation and loss of position. Serious risks therefore accompanied the great rewards of entering into the debates of the Stammaitic academy. Narrative sources portray the experience of shame in terms of the death of a sage, depicting a type of social demise as real death, so we can imagine how terrifying the prospect of the experience must have been.

One of the major risks of face-to-face debate, of the heated interchanges that characterize passionate arguments over topics of ultimate concern, is the possibility of the attacks' becoming personal. A frustrated or overly zealous sage was liable to shift from assaults on his opponent's position or reasoning to assaults on his person, including insults and name-calling. Similarly, having vanquished his opponent, an ungracious victor sometimes might boast of his exploits or verbally abuse the loser, adding insult to injury as it were. These very human tendencies magnified the potential for humiliation. At the same time, to shame another sage, especially a superior scholar deserving of respect, was a terrible sin. Several stories tell of the death of a sage as divine punishment for causing the humiliation of a fellow rabbi—even though in some cases the offences were unintentional. To engage in dialectics was therefore an extremely tricky and delicate business. A sage tried to defeat his opponents while simultaneously avoiding the Scylla of suffering humiliation and the Charybdis of insulting his colleagues and immorally embarrassing them. Only by achieving this balance could a sage rise through the academic ranks, achieve high honor, and perhaps attain a coveted position of leadership.

This intense pressure to succeed and the costs of failure undoubtedly had a salutary educational impact. In order to avoid the public humiliation of losing a debate the sages made great efforts to study, prepare, and memorize traditions. A late story describes how an assistant once advised the head of the academy to "look deeply" into the morrow's lesson due to the arrival of a brilliant student.[23] He feared for his master, lest he be unable to answer the powerful objections of the newcomer, and therefore cautioned him to be super-prepared. All sages who anticipated taking part in the rigorous debate presumably "looked deeply" into the material and mastered every nuance and intricacy so as not to fail. However unhealthy by modern standards was the anxiety of the honor-shame culture of the academy, the payoff came in the high level of discourse that it produced, a discourse attested to by every folio of Talmud.

The Stammaim exhibited an elitist attitude toward nonrabbis, a product in part of the value they placed on Torah study (and especially dialectics!) as the highest good and their corresponding devaluation of all who took no part in the enterprise. We find shocking expressions of contempt for the *am ha'arets,* a term used for nonrabbinic Jews, that go as far as to encourage hostility and violence. One such tradition, pseudepigraphically attributed to a Tannaitic sage, states, "It is permitted to stab an *am ha'arets* on Yom Kippur that falls on a Sabbath."[24] Exactly what this means in terms of real social relations is difficult to know. Because the Stammaim so heavily reworked the traditions in the Bavli for an intended audience of like-minded sages, these antagonistic traditions should probably be seen as a type of self-promoting snobbery, not unlike the nasty jokes told among insiders but never aired in public. Relationships outside of the academy were probably cordial. The virulence of the descriptions of some of these traditions, moreover, is due to the Bavli's tendency to hyperbole and exaggeration. But I am by no means motivated here by apologetic concerns. However we understand the link between such language and the underlying social reality, it certainly informs us of a significant aspect of the Stammaitic mentalité. In their Torah-centered worldview, Torah study so surpassed all other pursuits—even other spiritual activities like prayer—that those who took no part in it were considered almost worthless.

Wives—another category of outsiders—also constituted a major tension in the thought of the Stammaim. As opposed to earlier times, when sages studied in smaller schools or disciple-circles with a local master, the rise of a few centralized academies meant that some sages had to travel great distances from their home towns to pursue their studies. Several stories describe sages leaving home for many years of Torah study and the problems

caused by these long absences. This logistical situation caught the Stammaim in a dilemma between the conjugal duties and general domestic responsibilities they owed to their wives and the indispensability of attending the academy in order to master Torah. Because they could not opt for a life of celibacy, like their Christian counterparts, rabbinic sages had to struggle to satisfy these two competing, and at times mutually exclusive, values.

A considerable proportion of Bavli stories are thus focused on the internal world of the rabbinic academy or on the tensions that impact academic life (interactions with wives, place of nonrabbis, difficulties of material support, etc.). And it is this focus that generally distinguishes them from the parallel versions in the Yerushalmi and other earlier compilations. I have therefore speculated that the rise of the academy in Stammaitic times may also be responsible for the closing of the Amoraic era and the new self-consciousness of the Stammaim.[25] The Amoraim, both in Babylonia and in the Land of Israel, studied in disciple-circles or small schools (*batei midrash*) where a few students attended upon one rabbinic master.[26] The disciple-circle was essentially coextensive with the life of the master; if he died, the disciples had to find another master or stake out on their own. The academy depicted in Stammaitic narratives, however, is an *institution* that transcended the life of any individual figure. When the head of the academy or another officer died, another sage took his place. Sages could come and go, but the institution—its protocols, rules of conduct, hierarchy, and curriculum—continued.

An institutionalized academy with numerous students and masters studying together is a corporate body that overshadows the individuality of its members. In a disciple-circle a student receives a tradition directly from one master and naturally cites it in his master's name. Students of an academy, on the other hand, associate their traditions with the academy, rather than with any individual. Louis Ginzberg observed that, apart from the heads of academies, we know the name of hardly any of the sages who flourished throughout the approximate four hundred years of the Geonic era.[27] Geonic responsa, moreover, are written in the anonymous third person plural: "thus we (= the sages of the academy) rule," "so we teach," "thus we hold." In the Stammaitic academies, the precursors to those of the Geonic era, a similar consciousness and protocol seem to have prevailed. Students no longer attributed traditions to individual masters but formulated traditions anonymously, and in this way they produced the unattributed stratum of the Bavli. Thus, I suggest that this shift in the form of social organization of the sages may also account for the transition in the mode of formulating traditions, and that it likewise produced the distinct self-consciousness of

the Stammaim as belonging to an era different from that of their predecessors, the Amoraim. We have no other persuasive explanation for the end of the Amoraic era, so an explanation in terms of the different structures of learning has much to recommend it.

Stories of the Babylonian Talmud

The present volume continues the work of these two earlier books. The organization follows that of *Talmudic Stories,* with each chapter focusing on a discrete story or series of stories. One goal is to expand the corpus of Bavli stories analyzed with critical methods. As opposed to the Bible, where almost every verse of both the Hebrew and Christian Scriptures has been the subject of numerous studies and commentaries, much of the Talmud is *terra incognita*. We lack critical commentaries, not to mention critical editions, of all but a handful of chapters of Talmud. Stories have fared marginally better, having received some attention from literary scholars in recent years; but most still lack comprehensive analyses using all the tools of academic Talmud study, including source- and form-criticism. Fredric Jameson, writing of the "great traditional systems of hermeneutic," including the Talmud, observes that these interpretive projects "sprang from cultural need and from the desperate attempt of the society in question to assimilate monuments of other times and places, whose original impulses were quite foreign to them."[28] The stories of the Bavli in turn have become "monuments of other times and places" that require careful interpretation if we are to appreciate their profound, subtle, and interesting meditations on deeply human issues. I hope these studies will help readers to "assimilate" these stories and to understand them and their shadowy, elusive authors, the Stammaim. The studies collected here are therefore a contribution to the explication and appreciation of Bavli passages in general and stories in particular.

A second focus of this book is the processes of reworking and composition of the stories. In each chapter, I have included a detailed section carefully documenting how the Bavli storytellers changed earlier versions to produce new stories of their own creation and explaining why these changes should be attributed to the Stammaim. This can prove a difficult task, as noted above, since the telltale signs known from the Stammaitic intervention in legal material usually do not apply to narratives. We must therefore rely on other indications of editorial reworking and continue to develop additional criteria by which to detect the hand of the Stammaim and discern their role in narrative composition. Chapter 5 is devoted almost entirely to this question; there I analyze two intersecting Bavli stories, the well-

known story of the deposition of Rabban Gamaliel (bBer 27b–28a) and its lesser-known partial parallel (bBekh 36a), as these provide an outstanding illustration of Stammaitic compositional techniques.

Now, some readers will consider the amount of energy directed to this matter excessive. In a review of a volume I edited entitled, *Creation and Composition: The Contribution of the Bavli Redactors* (Stammaim) *to the Aggada* (2005), Robert Goldenberg observed: "The only question in this reviewer's mind was why the volume was necessary in the first place. There was no plausible reason to suppose that the Stammaim would have handled aggadic material differently than the legal teaching receiving most of their attention, or at least no such reason is suggested, and indeed it turns out that they did not."[29] Goldenberg considers it self-evident that the Stammaim who edited and composed the legal portions of the Bavli should have done the same for narratives and other nonlegal materials, and he sees no reason to argue this point. While Goldenberg's confidence is gratifying, his opinion is not shared by all. The Stammaitic authorship of narratives has been challenged in two ways. Some scholars accept Bavli stories as the product of the Stammaim, or as Stammaitic reworkings of earlier sources, but question our ability to separate the strata. The Bavli Amoraim through whose hands the stories reached the Stammaim presumably introduced some changes, whether consciously or subconsciously, to the versions they received.[30] Although the Stammaim continued to rework the stories, the scope of their contribution cannot be identified with confidence. To a certain extent I agree with this contention, as some elements of the reworking may lack signs by which the two strata can be distinguished; I have therefore tried to base conclusions on the clear cases of Stammaitic intervention. In a more extreme form, namely complete rejection of any possibility of discerning the Stammaitic contribution, this challenge would vitiate many of my claims, as we could not be sure which aspects of culture described above are Amoraic and which Stammaitic. These studies would still have utility in identifying general differences between the Palestinian and Babylonian rabbinic cultures, but they could not tell us anything distinctive about the Stammaim.[31] A second, less common, criticism completely rejects the thesis that the Stammaim composed Bavli stories and limits Stammaitic activity to the legal portions of the Talmud.[32] According to this view, the Stammaim (or the "post-Amoraic editors," for scholars who avoid the term "Stammaim") specialized in legal argumentation, while another group of unidentified sages devoted themselves to aggada and stories.[33] Because this proposition continues to be challenged, I feel compelled to give it close attention throughout this book. To those who feel that I am beating a dead

horse, I can only plead that others consider the horse very much alive. Readers who believe the issue resolved—as well as those more interested in the literary dimension of the stories—can skip these sections of the chapters without loss.

My other goals are to continue the avenues of investigation of the two previous volumes. These include: (1) the poetics of Bavli narratives and their use of irony, paronomasia, wordplay, symbolic names, keywords, and other literary devices; (2) the specific culture of the Stammaitic academy, including their worldview and values and the tensions that dominated their life; (3) the redactional context and function of stories, why stories were placed in their current locations and for what purposes; (4) the relationship between law and narrative, especially the connection between the story and the halakha of the proximate Mishna; and (5) the overall cultural context of stories, that is, how narrative themes intersect with related ideas in other Bavli passages.

Outline

Chapters 2 through 5 feature stories dealing with aspects of academic life. Chapter 2 analyzes the story of the unfortunate sage Abdan, who insults another scholar in the academy, only to suffer a catastrophic reversal when he in turn suffers humiliation (bYev 105b). This story vividly portrays the structure of the academy, its honor-shame culture, and the nature of dialectical argumentation. Chapter 3 discusses the story of two sages, Ilfa and R. Yohanan, who leave the academy on account of poverty (bTa 21a). Though not set in the academy, the story addresses significant academic concerns, including the question of material support, the tension between study and earning a living, and the issue of leadership. Chapter 4 treats the famous story of Honi and his seventy-year nap (bTa 23a). The story reveals the academic focus of the Bavli storytellers; when Honi awakens he returns to his academy, with tragic results. Here too we gain a keen sense of the importance of honor and academic status. Chapter 5, as mentioned above, focuses mainly on the compositional process of stories, by comparing two stories of conflicts between Rabban Gamaliel and R. Yehoshua (bBer 27b–28a, bBekh 36a). The two stories offer a detailed picture of academic life and strong evidence of late dating, so I have placed this chapter with stories of the academy.

The next two chapters treat stories of masters and disciples, a theme prevalent in sources found in all rabbinic compilations, including the Yerushalmi and Tannaitic midrashim, but given distinct expression in the Bavli. Chapter 6 analyzes the account of two disciples who visit R. Yehoshua and report

the rabbinic discussions they have just witnessed (bHag 3a–3b). The Talmudic passage contrasts their deferential reply to R. Yehoshua with the more straightforward speech of another student, who suffered greatly from his master's rebuke. The report includes a complex homily that expresses a daring ideology of rabbinic interpretation and authority. The Bavli's versions of both the homily and the rabbinic encounter differ significantly from earlier Tannaitic versions, brilliantly exemplifying Stammaitic narrative technique and worldview. In Chapter 7 I discuss the famous story of the heresy of Jesus, which has received a great deal of (misguided) scholarly attention, in the search for a historical kernel, but relatively little literary and source-critical study (bSot 47a). In fact, the passage focuses on the breakdown of the relationships between the masters R. Joshua b. Perahia and Elisha and their respective disciples Jesus and Gehazi, placing the blame on the masters' harsh rebukes. Once again the differences between the Bavli's versions of the two stories and those of the Yerushalmi illustrate the techniques of Stammaitic narrative reworking. The master-disciple stories in these two chapters thus provide cautionary lessons both to disciples (Chapter 6) and to masters (Chapter 7), addressing the central relationship of rabbinic pedagogy.

The final two chapters focus on stories that feature important aspects of the Stammaitic worldview. Chapter 8 assesses a series of three stories of dire predictions of astrologers (bShab 156b). The stories and the larger *sugya* grapple with the complex problem of astrology and the potential conflict between free will and fate, between divine freedom and astral determinism. The *sugya* and stories, which bear clear signs of Stammaitic composition, illustrate how the Stammaim engaged a theological issue in a quasi-systematic manner. Though clearly not the logical or syllogistic discourse of Hellenistic philosophy, this is nevertheless a kind of highly organized and coherent presentation of the issue through the combination of narrative, exegetical, and other traditions. Finally, Chapter 9 analyzes the story of Moses's visit to R. Akiba's academy, which deals with two difficult theological issues, the expansion of Torah throughout the generations and the suffering of the righteous (bMen 29b). The manner of composition of the story, through the reworking of parallel passages and the contrast with earlier traditions, points to a distinct Stammaitic theodicy. These perspectives on astrology and theodicy can be added to our reconstruction of the worldview of the Stammaim. Chapter 10, the conclusion, organizes the findings of the individual chapters according to topic and provides a taxonomy of the primary techniques of Stammaitic composition.

Chapter 2

The Shaming of Abdan (Yevamot 105b)

We start in the heart of the late Babylonian rabbinic academy with the story of the sage Abdan. This magnificent story contains almost all of the typical elements of such accounts: a well-populated academy, dialectical argumentation, verbal violence, and shame together with its repercussions. Scholars have recognized that the story is fictional, insofar as the depiction of the characters has little connection to Palestinian sources, and that the motifs of competition and verbal insults mark it as a Babylonian creation.[1] The translation is based on ms Munich 95, with major variants listed in the chapter appendix.[2]

[A1] For R. Hiyya and R. Shimon b. Rabbi were sitting. One opened: "When one prays he must direct his eyes upward, as is said, *Let us lift our hearts with our hands to God in heaven (Lam 3:41)*." The other opened and said: "When one prays he must direct his eyes downward, as is said, *My eyes and my heart shall ever be there (= the temple) (I Kgs 9:3)*."[3]

[A2] Just then R. Ishmael b. R. Yose approached. He said to them, "What are you busy with?" [They said to him,] "With prayer." He said to them, "Thus my father said: 'When one prays he must direct his eyes down and his heart upward in order to fulfill these two verses.'"

[B1] Just then Rabbi came to the academy.[4] Those who were light ran and sat in their places. R. Yishmael b. R. Yose, because of his weight, was treading as he went.

(1) Abdan said to him, "Who is this one who treads on the heads of the Holy People?" He said to him, "I am Ishmael, son of R. Yose, who has come to learn Torah from Rabbi."

(2) He said to him, "And are you worthy to learn Torah from Rabbi?" He said to him, "And was Moses our Master worthy to learn Torah from the mouth of the Almighty?"

(3) He said to him, "And are you Moses?" He said to him, "And is your master God?"

[B2] Rav Yosef said: "He [Rabbi] received his punishment since he [R. Ishmael] said to him 'your master' and not 'my master.'"

[C] Just then a *yevamah* came before him [Rabbi]. Rabbi said to Abdan, "Go out and check her" (to see if she is an adult, and therefore eligible to perform *halitsah*). After he went out, R. Ishmael said to him [Rabbi]: "Thus my father said, '*Man* is written in this passage (Deut 25:7–10; implying that he must be an adult). But as for a woman, whether a minor [or an adult] (can perform *halitsah*, and therefore she need not be checked).'"

[D1] He [Rabbi] said to him [Abdan]. "Come [back]. You are not needed. The elder has already given instruction."

[D2] Abdan was treading as he came. R. Yishmael b. R. Yose said, "He whom the Holy People needs—let him tread on the heads of the Holy People. He whom the Holy people does not need, how can he tread on the heads of the Holy People?"

[D3] Rabbi said to Abdan: "Stand in your place."

[D4] It was taught: At that time (1) Abdan became leprous, (2) and his two sons drowned, (3) and his two daughters-in-law made declarations of refusal (*mianu*) (to marry his other sons).

[D5] Rav Nahman bar Yitshaq said: "Blessed is the Merciful-One who embarrassed Abdan in this world."

Literary Analysis

The story can be divided into four scenes. The first scene, the exposition, tells of a debate between R. Hiyya and R. Shimon b. Rabbi. R. Ishmael b. R. Yose arrives and resolves the issue. In the second scene, as a result of Rabbi's arrival, R. Ishmael has difficulty reaching his seat, and Abdan at-

tempts to humiliate R. Ishmael. In the third scene the advent of a *yevamah* raises a halakhic question; R. Ishmael resolves this issue too. In the final scene Abdan has difficulty reaching his seat. Thereupon R. Ishmael exacts his revenge by causing the humiliation of Abdan, who receives a severe punishment.

(A) R. Ishmael arrives and resolves halakhic disagreement with his father's teaching	(B) Rabbi arrives. R. Ishmael has difficulty reaching his seat Abdan humiliates R. Ishmael 3-fold interchange Comment attributed to *amora*
(C) *Yevamah* arrives; R. Ishmael resolves halakhic question with his father's teaching	(D) Rabbi instructs Abdan to return Abdan has difficulty reaching his seat R. Ishmael humiliates Abdan 3-fold punishment Comment attributed to *amora*

Apart from the shifts in action, the story is structured by the correspondences and reversals illustrated in the diagram above. In the first and third scenes R. Ishmael resolves a halakhic question by citing his father. The second and fourth scene contain the key reversal: R. Ishmael's trouble reaching his seat and Abdan humiliating him in scene B, reversed with Abdan's trouble reaching his seat and R. Ishmael causing his humiliation in scene D. The sharp exchange between the two sages in scene B contains a series of three questions and responses, paralleled by the three punishments Abdan suffers in scene D. Both scenes are initiated by actions of Rabbi: his arrival in scene B and his instruction to Abdan to return in scene D. Moreover, observations attributed to *amoraim* conclude scenes B and D, the two halves of the story. Additional symmetry is provided by the repetition of "Just then so-and-so arrived (*addehakhi ata*)," which opens scenes B and C, and marks R. Ishmael's entrance in scene A.

The story begins with a typical disagreement between two sages, R. Hiyya and R. Shimon b. Rabbi, concerning a detail of the proper orientation for prayer, each sage supporting his position with a scriptural prooftext. While 1 Kgs 9:3 ("My eyes and my heart shall ever be [towards] there," *viz.*, toward the temple) implies that one should keep his eyes down and gaze upon, or

toward, the temple.[5] Lam 3:41 ("Let us lift our hearts with our hands to God in heaven") suggests that one direct one's heart, hands, and, presumably, eyes, upward toward heaven. R. Ishmael b. R. Yose arrives in the middle of this debate—his advent marked by the term *addehakhi*, "just then," a favorite literary device of the Bavli[6]—and immediately resolves it by quoting his father's tradition: the eyes gaze down even as the heart (meaning one's mind or thoughts) is directed upward. In this way R. Ishmael compromises both between verses ("in order to fulfill these two verses") and sages. This produces a happy resolution to the halakhic dispute—neither sage need be rejected and experience the disappointment of defeat.

At first glance there appears to be little relationship between this opening scene and the rest of the composition other than the introduction of R. Ishmael b. R. Yose as the protagonist and the location of the story, both temporally and spatially, in Rabbi's (fictional) academy. R. Shimon b. Rabbi, R. Hiyya, and R. Ishmael are well-known fifth-generation Tannaim and associates of Rabbi. Yet the length of this exposition seems rather excessive for such modest purposes, which could have been accomplished with a great deal more verbal economy. Also unusual is that the scriptural interpretations do not pertain to the thematics of the story—what does liturgical orientation have to do with the rest of the action? In the story of Elisha b. Abuya, by contrast, Elisha and R. Meir discuss the interpretation of verses that substantively relate to the situation of Elisha and the narrative's theological concerns.[7] I would therefore suggest that the storytellers mean to contrast the types of interaction between sages rather than the content of their interpretations. R. Ishmael successfully mediates between two sages such that both are partially correct and their dispute is worked out irenically. The extremely mean-spirited words of Abdan and his verbal interchange with R. Ishmael in the subsequent scenes differ sharply in this regard. We may also conclude that R. Ishmael is not a troublemaker by nature, as he directs his efforts here to resolving a conflict.[8] His shaming of Abdan should therefore be seen as a justified reaction to Abdan's hostility, not an indication of an equally obnoxious character. This point helps to explain why Abdan receives such horrendous punishment while R. Ishmael receives none. Finally, R. Ishmael's engagement with these sages may help to explain why he was delayed in reaching his place.

At Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi's entrance—also introduced with the dramatic "just then" (*addehakhi*), perhaps indicating that he came unexpectedly early—the sages of the academy scramble to find "their places." The storytellers presuppose a hierarchical arrangement, presumably with the best students occupying seats in the front rows and the more inferior students

towards the rear, as we find in other late Bavli narratives and as we shall see in Chapter 9.[9] Because the sages cannot simply sit down in the closest and most convenient place, it takes some time for each to arrive at his designated spot, and the slower moving sages end up stepping around and upon those who more speedily reached their places. That Abdan charges R. Ishmael with "treading" or stepping "upon the heads" suggests that the sages are sitting upon the ground, an arrangement also attested in other late Bavli stories and typical of higher learning in Persia during the Sassanian and Muslim eras.[10]

What motivates Abdan to humiliate the stout R. Ishmael is not entirely clear. Apparently he is annoyed that Abdan disturbs or steps upon the now seated sages, or perhaps he has himself been bumped in R. Ishmael's clumsy efforts to hustle belatedly to his place. It may be that Abdan speaks out of a misguided effort to defend Rabbi's honor from R. Ishmael's (unintended) offense of not being seated, ready and waiting, when the great master is ready to commence his lecture. If Abdan is Rabbi's personal assistant (*amora*), as is known from other sources and implied when Rabbi subsequently sends him out to check the status of the *yevamah*, then he may feel responsible for maintaining order in the assembly and may have taken umbrage at R. Ishmael's delay.[11] Perhaps we should not discount the possibility that the storytellers simply wish to depict Abdan as a mean-spirited and intolerant person. In any case, there is little doubt that he intends to embarrass his colleague by publicly calling attention to R. Ishmael's faux pas and implying that the slowpoke does not deserve to take part in the assembly.

Abdan's abuse also creates a subtle wordplay, in tandem with the storyteller's mention of R. Ishmael's "weight" as the cause of his slowness. The word he uses, *iqareih* in ms M, more correctly *yuqreih* in ms O^2,[12] is from the same root as, and is virtually a homonym for, *yeqareih*, "his honor," signifying weightiness or importance. Of course, Abdan does not treat R. Ishmael with the honor that befits his "weightiness" but rather the opposite, with dishonor on account of his physical weight. The choice of this word, where the storyteller could have used a synonym or another locution to convey the same idea, points us again to the thematics of the story. (In fact the concordance lists no other passage where this term is used for the physical weight of a human being, suggesting the wordplay was deliberate.[13])

Neither backing down nor shrinking from the insult, R. Ishmael responds confidently ("I am Ishmael") and effectively, answering Abdan's spiteful rhetorical question and simultaneously providing a justification. While his reason for being present is almost obvious, by articulating it—"I have come to learn Torah from Rabbi"—he subtly subverts the premises of

Abdan's attack. The study of the Torah is clearly the highest rabbinic value; hence, that he comes to learn from Rabbi serves to honor, not dishonor, the master. Rhetorical answer parries rhetorical question. Yet there is also a pointed allusion in the phrase "I have come to learn Torah" (*bati lilmod torah*), which appears in this form in only one other context in the Bavli, as an example of "verbal wronging" (*onaat devarim*): "If he is a convert and **comes to learn Torah** (*ba lilmod torah*), do not say to him, 'Should the mouth that ate carrion and *tereifot*, disgusting and crawling things **come to learn Torah** that was spoken from the **mouth of the Almighty** (*mipi hagevura*)'" (bBM 58b).[14] Note that the concluding phrase of this source appears in R. Ishmael's next response to Abdan, "Was Moses fit to learn Torah from the **mouth of the Almighty** (*mipi hagevura*)." This double quotation together with a context related to the thematics of the story, namely the prohibition against shaming others, is strong evidence that the storytellers deliberately alluded to this source and presumably expected their audience to appreciate the connection. Just as it is forbidden to humiliate the proselyte who "comes to learn Torah," so it is wrong to embarrass R. Ishmael who "comes to learn Torah."[15] With this pointed allusion the storytellers make it clear that Abdan is the offending party, guilty of violating the serious prohibition against shaming or verbally wronging others.[16]

The repartee between Abdan and R. Ishmael consists of a series of three questions and three responses, of which two are themselves questions—the quintessential "answer a question with a question" strategy. Here we have a beautiful parallel to the standard form of halakhic *sugyot*, which typically involve a series of three objections and solutions.[17] The exchange also comprises an outstanding example of why shame is such a danger in the Stammaitic academy and such a concern among the Stammaim: when polished dialectical abilities are directed at an opponent rather than at the topic under discussion, they can cause profound humiliation.

A brief, non-narrative comment interrupts the story at this point.[18] A statement attributed to Rav Yosef (below we will argue that it is a Stammaitic pseudepigraph) observes that Rabbi received a measure of punishment insofar as R. Ishmael referred to him as "your master" rather than "my master." The latter confers more honor, as the former may imply that R. Ishmael does not consider Rabbi to be his own master. The reason for this penalty is apparently that Rabbi remained silent while Abdan shamed R. Ishmael rather than protest the indignity.[19] In a fitting punishment, Rabbi, having countenanced R. Ishmael's shaming, is in turn dishonored by R. Ishmael. Now this "punishment" is both slight and temporary. The difference between "your master" (*rabkha*) and "my master" (*rabbi*) is but one Hebrew

letter, and, in the context of their verbal sparring, where "your master" fits better, only the most astute dialectician would consider "my master" to express dishonor. Moreover, R. Ishmael subsequently honors Rabbi in that he behaves like a typical member of the academy, and Rabbi allows R. Ishmael to avenge the insult and even contributes to the shaming of Abdan. The observation calling attention to this minimal slight to Rabbi's honor therefore functions mostly as a transparent marker of the story's thematics. The story is about shame in the academy, and the storytellers splice in a somewhat awkward non-narrative comment to focus the audience's attention on this theme.

The timely arrival of a *yevamah*, again introduced with the dramatic "just then," begins the dramatic reversal. Here we have the connection between the story and the halakhic context in Tractate Yevamot, the issue of whether a minor may perform *halitsah* (see below). According to the logic of the story, Rabbi assumed that a minor is not eligible to perform the rite, and therefore sent Abdan to have the girl checked to make sure that she had reached maturity. Why does Rabbi choose Abdan? In Palestinian sources Abdan is known as Rabbi's assistant, and elsewhere in the Bavli Rabbi sends Abdan on a similar task.[20] If we are not to presuppose this information and rely exclusively on the narrative world of the story, we may infer that Rabbi specifically chooses Abdan in order to pave the way for R. Ishmael's revenge. (Of course he could not have known specifically that R. Ishmael would pipe up with his father's teaching on the subject. Rather Rabbi would have been anticipating some other method of teaching Abdan a lesson.) Nor are these two possibilities mutually exclusive—the storytellers may be depicting Abdan as Rabbi's nasty assistant. At all events, R. Ishmael seems to have waited calculatingly until Abdan had left the room, or almost exited the door,[21] and only then informed Rabbi of his father's teaching on the subject, that a minor may indeed perform *halitsah*.[22] Rabbi accepts this teaching and immediately informs Abdan that his efforts are "not needed" (*la tsrikhat*). While this gesture could be innocent, even kind, intended to inform Abdan why he was brought back so soon and without completing his errand (assuming Rabbi did not specifically send Abdan as punishment, but because of Abdan's position as his assistant), it ultimately proves Abdan's undoing.

The narrative reversal continues with Abdan now treading on the seated assembly as he struggles to return to his place and R. Ishmael now humiliating his rival with a charge similar to that which had been directed at him (D2). But R. Ishmael adds to the "treading" charge Rabbi's words that Abdan is "not needed." R. Ishmael himself "was needed," as he supplied the pertinent halakhic tradition and so legitimately trod; Abdan is not needed

and therefore may not tread. Not only does Ishmael articulate the reversed charge, but it is precisely because of his tradition that the charge may be reversed. In other words, he is both the ultimate and proximate cause of Abdan's downfall. Complete and total revenge.

Unlike R. Ishmael, Abdan has no defense, and Rabbi accordingly instructs him to stand in his place, shaming him in front of the assembly of sages (D3). His standing contrasts with the sages, who are sitting in their places, and with his and R. Ishmael's movement, described as "treading as they went."[23] That Rabbi directs him to stand "in his place" recalls the earlier scramble of sages to get to "their places," because of which Abdan shamed R. Ishmael.[24] But, of course, Abdan is now very out of place, and it is he, not the earlier out-of-place R. Ishmael, who is truly humiliated. The drastic consequences are consistent with the horror of public shame in late Babylonian sources.[25] The three punishments correspond to the three insulting charges directed at R. Ishmael in the second scene, again a type of measure-for-measure theme.[26] That Abdan suffers leprosy may be on account of the sin of "evil speech" (*lashon hara*), as the commentators suggest, though here we have insults and humiliation rather than the more common gossip or slander.[27] The death of his sons is followed by the third punishment, when the minor females who were betrothed to his dead sons refuse to marry his other sons.[28] That this punishment involves (potential) daughters-in-law who have not yet reached their majority intersects again with the halakhic context of Tractate Yevamot and the case of the *yevamah* within the story, which paved the way to Abdan's downfall.[29] Finally, R. Nahman b. Yitshaq's coda suggesting that Abdan was fortunate to receive the punishment, however severe, in this world rather than the next emphasizes again the horror of public shame, concluding the story with its main interest.[30] In this way Abdan fulfils a pun on the meaning of his name, "Lost One/Perished One."[31]

To conclude: this story provides a beautiful window into the Stammaitic academy in general and the workings of shaming and being shamed in particular. The fast-paced exchange between Abdan and R. Ishmael comprises a superb example of the potential use of dialectical acumen to humiliate another sage. It recalls R. Yohanan's piercing insult of Resh Laqish, "A brigand knows brigandage," from another late Bavli narrative of academic warfare, but it adds the dialectical form to great effect.[32] The depiction of Abdan's aborted return to his seat likewise presents a vivid image of humiliation before the assembled body of sages. The explicit, albeit modest, criticism of Rabbi perhaps should be seen as criticism of the head of the academy, which may have become a hereditary office rather than a meritocracy in Stammai-

tic times, a phenomenon attested in other late narratives.[33] We get a keen sense of the ethos that prevailed within the academy of the Stammaim.

Building Blocks, Sources, and Motifs

This story is a free creation of the Stammaitic storytellers—it has no real parallel in the Yerushalmi or in other Palestinian sources—[34] yet the storytellers drew on many preexistent traditions from within and without the Bavli for building blocks and included a number of stock motifs,[35] the use and reworking of which point to the storytellers' being Stammaim.

1. The opening formulae. The story introduces the characters and setting with the opening formulae. Boldface type points out wording similarities.

> [A] R. X and R. Y **were sitting** (*havu yatvei*). **One opened** and said (*patah . . . amar*) . . . The **other opened** and said (*patah idakh ve'amar*) . . .

> [B] **Just then** (*addehakhi*) R. Z **approached them**. He said, "**What are you busy with** (*bemai askitu*)." **They said to him**, "**With** prayer." **He said to them**, "**Thus** father said . . ."

Both of these are attested formulae for rabbinic discussions. [A] is found about four times, e.g.:

> Rav Manyomei bar Hilkiya and Rav Hilkiah bar Tuvia and Rav Huna bar Hiyya **were sitting** together. They said, "If anyone has heard a tradition about Kefar Sekhania of Egypt, let him say it." **One** of them **opened** and said . . . The **other opened** and said . . . The **other opened** and said . . . (bGit 57b).[36]

A particularly close parallel to [B] appears in bGit 31b:

> Rav Huna and Rav Hisda **were sitting**. Geniva was passing by and walking toward them. One said to his fellow . . . The other said to him . . . **Just then** he **approached them**. He said to them, "**What are you busy with?**" **They said to him**, "**With** winds." **He said to them**, "**Thus said** Rav Hanan b. Rabbah in the name of Rav . . . ."

The storytellers seem to have borrowed the content of the dispute from the Palestinian sources cited below and to have cast it into standard Babylonian

forms for presenting academic study and debate. These forms do not occur outside of the Bavli (except in citations in late midrashim such as the *Yalqut Shimoni*).

2. The midrash halakha concerning the orientation for prayer. This tradition appears in a different form in yBer 4:5, 8c (pp. 40–41), paralleled with minor variation in *ShirR* 4:5:1(25b).

yBer 4:5, 8c (40–41)	*ShirR* 4:4 (25b)
[A] One verse states, *And I will return to my abode [Till they realize their guilt. In their distress, they will seek my face and beg for my favor] (Hos 5:15)*. And another verse states, *My eyes and my heart shall ever be there (1 Kgs 9:3)*. How so? Let him direct his face upward but his eyes and heart downward.	[A] One verse states, *My eyes and my heart shall ever be there (1 Kgs 9:3)*. And another verses states, *And I will return to my abode [Till they realize their guilt. In their distress, they will seek my face and beg for my favor] (Hos 5:15)*. How can these two verses be fulfilled? Let him direct his face upward and his heart downward.
[B] If not [i.e. if he is not able to turn his face], let him direct his heart toward the Holy of Holies (= mBer 4:5).	[B] As we learned, [If he is not able to turn his face], let him direct his heart toward the Holy of Holies (= mBer 4:5).
[C] To which Holy of Holies? R. Hiyya Rabba [says]: "Toward the Holy of Holies above." R. Shimon b. Halafta says, "Toward the Holy of Holies below." R. Pinhas says, "They do not disagree. The Holy of Holies below is opposite the Holy of Holies above. [As it says,] *The place (*makhon*) you made to dwell in (Exod 15:17)*—opposite (*mekhuvan*) your dwelling [above]."	[C] To which Holy of Holies? R. Hiyya Rabba and R. Shimon b. Halafta [disagreed]. R. Hiyya Rabba [says]: "Toward the Holy of Holies above." R. Shimon b. Halafta says, "Toward the Holy of Holies below." R. Pinhas said, "I will establish the words of both [sages]. The Holy of Holies below is opposite the Holy of Holies above. [As it says,] *The place (*makhon*) you made to dwell in (Exod 15:17)*—opposite (*mekhuvan*) your dwelling. This is the Holy of Holies above."

As in the Bavli, the question in [A] concerns the proper orientation for prayer, an issue sparked by the tension between two verses, and approximately the same solution is offered. The disputants in [C] are similar to those in the Bavli, the same R. Hiyya (R. Hiyya is regularly called R. Hiyya Rabba in the PT), and R. Shimon b. Halafta in place of R. Shimon b. Rabbi of the Bavli (see below on the reason for the switch in Shimon.) Yet there are several significant differences. First, the verses differ in the BT, with Lam 3:41 being substituted for Hos 5:15.[37] Second, in the Palestinian sources there are two different conflicts. In [A] the issue is the *proper orientation of the body* during prayer: while facing the temple—the correct direction for prayer—one raises his face upward but focuses his eyes downward. In [C] the issue concerns the *proper direction* for prayer and is predicated on the problematic situation delineated in mBer 4:5—one riding his donkey who cannot turn towards the temple "directs his heart," that is, focuses his thoughts, upon the Holy of Holies—and the Amoraim disagree over the identification of that Holy of Holies. Note that the Yerushalmi actually contains two independent *sugyot,* separated by the citation of the Mishna (the *pisqa*, [B]).[38] In *ShirR*, however, the two *sugyot* have already been concatenated by transforming the Mishna citation into a prooftext supporting the resolution at [A] (although it does not really fit well) and then continuing with [C]. The Bavli borrows the names of the sages from [C] but has them dispute over the issue in [A] and lacks completely the content of [B–C].[39] The Bavli thus appears to have known a version of the tradition akin to that of *ShirR*, *viz*., after the two *sugyot* in the PT were combined into one. That the Bavli storytellers draw on a preexistent tradition, reworking it for their purposes, helps explain why R. Hiyya and R. Shimon b. Rabbi (the parallel to R. Shimon b. Halafta) appear as characters in the exposition and then totally disappear from the story. However, it does not explain why the storytellers chose to rework *this* tradition for their exposition, for which I have no good answer (other than the suggestions in the literary analysis above). Apparently they wanted to create for their audience a verisimilar depiction of Rabbi's academy (verisimilar according to their own expectations), and they opened with a typical dispute between Rabbi's contemporaries, to be resolved by R. Ishmael b. Yose, the protagonist of the story.[40]

The confusion in identity of R. Shimon is easy enough to understand given the vagaries of oral transmission. Moreover, R. Shimon b. Halafta regularly disputes and appears with R. Hiyya in the PT, but never in the Bavli. In the Bavli, on the other hand, R. Hiyya regularly appears with R. Shimon b. Rabbi.[41] The names in the Bavli tradition were probably transformed to accord with the more common pairing of disputants.

3. The motif of "treading on the heads of the holy people." In bSanh 7b we find: "R. Eliezer said: From where is it derived that a judge should not tread (*yifsa*) on the heads of the holy people . . ." followed by a scriptural prooftext.[42] In bMeg 27b (= bSot 39a) R. Eleazar b. Shamua tells his disciples three reasons why he merited a long life, among them that he never trod "on the heads of the holy people." This prohibition derives from a *baraita* found at bHor 13b (parallel to tSanh 7:8).

> The sons of the sages and disciples of the sages (*talmidei hakhamim*): when they are needed by the public, they may tread (*mafsi'in*) upon the heads of the people.[43] [Even though it is shameful for a disciple to enter late to the synagogue,] If he goes out to fulfill a need, he enters and sits in his place.[44]

The bracketed portion appears in ms M, but not in P^1, and appears in tSanh 7:8 without the words "to the synagogue." According to the subsequent discussion in ms M, "need" refers to bodily needs, that is, to relieve oneself, though this discussion is wanting in P^1. Now, tSanh 7:8 deals with the court, although the *sugya* at bHor 13b already understands the *baraita* as dealing with the academy (or at least applies it to the academy, despite the reference to the synagogue in the version of ms M). Whether our storytellers knew this explanation of "need" (and chose to ignore it) or not, they clearly generated the core plot from the logic of the *baraita*. Abdan essentially rebukes R. Ishmael at the outset of the story on the basis of this *baraita*—he inappropriately treads on the heads of the assembly. But the tables are turned when R. Ishmael states the law and thereby renders Abdan "not needed," removing the justification, according to the *baraita*, for the sage to return to his place.

4. "Who is this one who treads on the heads . . . ?" As Fraenkel has noted, the opening formula of this question recalls another story found in bBQ 81b:[45]

> Rabbi and R. Hiyya were conversing while walking on their way. They moved to the sides of the road. R. Yehuda b. Qenosia was **treading** (*mafsiah*) and walking before them.[46] Rabbi said to R. Hiyya, "**Who is this one** who shows off his piety before us?"

The halakhic issue here need not detain us. In this source too the question casts aspersions on the propriety of another individual's actions. Here too the individual was "treading" inappropriately (according to the questioner's

assumptions). Here too the story subsequently vindicates the "treader." And here too Rabbi is involved. The formula draws upon two biblical usages, "**Who is this** and where is he who dared to do this?" (Esth 7:5) and "For **who is this** that would dare approach me?" (Jer 30:21).[47] That the borrowing involves both the verb from the narrator's description and the opening formula from Rabbi's question suggests that the Stammaim are responsible, as we do not find Amoraim manipulating traditions in this way.

5. R. Ishmael quoting his father. As noted by Israel Ben-Shalom, on a number of occasions R. Ishmael quotes his father with the same form used twice in our narrative, "thus my father said . . . ." See for example bShab 15a, 51b, 52a; bEruv 80a; bPes 118b; bSuk 18a; bNid 25a.[48] Moreover, in bEruv 80a, R. Ishmael responds to R. Hiyya (as in A2, the first appearance in this narrative), and in most of the other cases he responds to Rabbi (as in C). Thus bNid 25a: "A question was asked before Rabbi . . . . He said to them, 'I have not heard [a relevant tradition].' R. Ishmael b. Rabbi said before him, 'Thus my father said . . . .'" Here too R. Ishmael resolves a legal question for Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi. The formula does not appear in the PT or Palestinian midrashim.

6. "The elder has already given instruction" (*kevar horah zaqen*). This expression also appears to be borrowed from elsewhere. It occurs in two other places in the Bavli: bShab 51a (= bSanh 24a) and bSanh 29b. In bShab 51a, after Rabbi rules on a legal question, R. Ishmael b. R. Yose quotes his father with the opposite ruling, and Rabbi concedes, "the elder has already given instruction." This surely could be the source of the exchange in our story. In bSanh 29b R. Hiyya states this expression in relation to a ruling of R. Ishmael b. R. Yose—the same characters that appear in our story.

7. Pseudepigraphic Amoraic dicta: B2, D5. Two Amoraic dicta appear within the narrative and give the impression that it is of Amoraic (or earlier) provenance. Both comments, however, result from Stammaitic transfers of dicta originally articulated elsewhere. A story in bPes 57a–b (= bKer 28b) tells of a corrupt high priest who was punished by the king with the amputation of both hands. The same Rav Yosef comments, "Praised be the Merciful One who caused Issachar of Kefar Barkai to receive his punishment in this world," using the same uncommon middle Iranian word for "punishment" (*mitarpseih*).[49] Another parallel appears in bSanh 21a: "Rav, and some say Rav Yosef, said: Mikhal received her punishment (*mitarpsah*)."

This word occurs only in these three passages in the entire Bavli (each time with the same verb "receive" [*sh-q-l*]). The dictum of Rav Nahman bar Yitshaq (D5) adapts a similar dictum of his from bShab 46b.[50]

bPes 57b (bKet 28b) / bShab 46b	bYev 105b
Rav Yosef said: Praised be the Merciful One who caused Issachar of Kefar Barkai **to receive his punishment** in this world.	**Rav Yosef said**: Rabbi **received his punishment** since he said to him 'your master' and not 'my master.'
Rav Nahman bar Yitshaq said: Praised be the Merciful One that Rava did not **embarrass** Rav Avia.	**Rav Nahman bar Yitshaq said: Praised be the Merciful One** who **embarrassed** Abdan in this world.

Note that Rav Yosef's dictum from bPes 57b is divided between Rav Yosef and Rav Nahman bar Yitshaq in our story, as the phrases "Praised by the Merciful One" and "in this world" appear in Rav Nahman b. Yitshaq's dictum, not in Rav Yosef's. (And while "Praised be the Merciful One" appears in Rav Nahman b. Yitshaq's dictum at bShab 46b, "in this world," does not, and was borrowed from Rav Yosef's dictum at bPes 57b.) This is a stunning example of the storytellers' reworking and recombining Amoraic dicta, recycling their parts in new combinations. And it points clearly to the Stammaim as the storytellers: we never find Amoraim reworking traditions in this complex manner, though Stammaim routinely construct legal *sugyot* with such techniques.

Note that these dicta embody the key lesson of the story, the severity of the sin of embarrassing another, hence the imposition of the harsh (though still merciful!) punishment on Abdan, and even the minor punishment of Rabbi, who did not prevent the humiliation. The Stammaitic storytellers perhaps preferred to place the moral of the story in the mouths of Amoraim, to lend it additional authority and clarity. If the audience does not appreciate the didactic point from the story itself, the non-narrative comments make the moral abundantly clear to even the densest Talmud student.

8. Abdan. The storytellers have transformed the character of Abdan, also called Abba Yudan in some Palestinian midrashim.[51] In the Yerushalmi he is Rabbi's *amora*, his assistant and "loudspeaker," who broadcasts the sage's words for the congregation: "Rabbi ordered Abdan, his *amora*, 'Proclaim

before the congregation: He who prays the evening prayer . . . ?"[52] In bNid 66a Rabbi sends Abdan to frighten a woman who bled during intercourse; his visit causes her to discharge the clotted blood responsible for her condition and thus be cured. Our story depicts Abdan as serving Rabbi in this type of capacity and uses such an errand in the plot;[53] but, as Ben-Shalom has noted, the portrayal of Abdan as a sage with such stature that he would dare confront and insult the great R. Ishmael b. R. Yose has no basis in Palestinian sources.[54] A functionary has been transformed into an important sage of the academy—a pure Stammaitic invention. Another reason the storytellers select Abdan as anti-hero of the story is the play on his name: Abdan = (the one who is) lost, destroyed.

9. Abdan's punishment. As noted above, leprosy is the standard punishment for evil speech in rabbinic sources. Most interesting is the declaration of refusal (*mi'un*) of his daughters-in-law, which appears in bYev 108a:

> Come and hear: Abdan's daughters-in-law rebelled (i.e., would not consummate the marriages with their designated grooms). Rabbi sent a pair of rabbis to check them (*lemivdaqinhu*) (to ascertain their true intentions). [Meanwhile] some women said to them [the daughters-in-law], "See, your husbands approach." They said, "May they be your husbands!" Rabbi said, "There is no declaration of refusal (*mi'un*) greater than this!"

This is clearly the source of one of the punishments meted out against Abdan in the story.[55] The tradition appears in close Talmudic proximity—just three folios distant (bYev 108a vs. 105b). As in the story, Rabbi sends some sages "to check" the facts of a halakhic issue related to marriage, and this too may have influenced the elements of the plot in the story. In other cases also we find late storytellers borrowing from "local" passages almost as if they were creating their narratives by duplicating and reworking material right before their eyes or, rather, ears (as the Bavli remained oral until well into the Geonic period). Whether oral or written, the use of proximate material implies the fixed order of a redacted text, and therefore points to the Stammaim.

I can find no parallel to the drowning death of Abdan's sons.

10. R. Ishmael's size. The motif of R. Ishmael b. R. Yose's "weight" or gargantuan fatness is attested in bBM 84a, another late narrative. "When R. Ishmael b. R. Yose and R. Eleazar b. R. Shimon would meet, a yoke of

oxen could pass between them and not touch them"—because their stomachs protruded so much.[56] R. Ishmael says as much himself—that he has a "wide belly"—in a brief story at bPes 86b.[57]

In sum, the storytellers drew on a variety of sources for the raw materials to construct their narrative. Many of the locutions, forms, and motifs were available in other Bavli passages, some of them in Tractate Yevamot in close proximity to the redactional context of the story. While some of these building blocks conceivably could have been employed by Amoraim, others clearly point to the Stammaim, as noted above. Moreover, the number and density of the adapted passages indicate that the Stammaim are responsible, as they routinely combined multiple sources to construct elaborate literary units.

Halakhic Context

This story is closely related to its halakhic context, the Talmudic discussion of mYev 12:4. This anonymous Mishna rules: "A minor girl who performs *halitsah* must perform it again when she grows up. And if she does not, the *halitsah* (performed as a minor) is not valid." An outline of the *sugya* is as follows, with the Amoraic stratum printed in the larger font, the Stammaitic stratum in a smaller font:

[a] Rav Yehuda said Shmuel[58] said: "These [= the ruling in the Mishna] are the words of R. Meir, who reasons: *Man* is written in the passage [about the ritual of the *halitsah*, Deut 25:7–10], and we draw an analogy between a man and a woman [that both must be adults]. But the sages reason: *Man* is written in this passage (Deut 25:7–10). But as for a woman, whether a minor or an adult (she can perform *halitsah*)."

[b] Who is the sages? R. Yose. For—[59]

[c] <The Story>

[d] R. Ami says: From the words of Beribbi[60] [we learn that] A minor female may perform *halitsah* during her childhood. Rava says: [Not] until she reaches the age of vowing.

[e] And the law is [vehilkheta]: [Not] until she produces two hairs.

Shmuel claims that the anonymous Mishna actually expresses the view of R. Meir alone, but the majority opinion of the sages is the opposite. He refers to Deut 25:7–10, which describes the *halitsah* ritual and states: "If the man (*ish*) does not want to marry his brother's widow, his brother's widow shall appear before the elders in the gates and declare . . ." According to Shmuel both R. Meir and the sages agree that this passage requires the male to be an adult, as it explicitly states "man." R. Meir rules that the woman too must be an adult, as we draw a connection (*heqesh*) between the two. The sages, however, note that these verses never use the word "woman" but consistently refer to the female as the "brother's widow." They reason that this "brother's widow" may be a woman or a girl, an adult or a minor.[61]

Following Shmuel's dictum, an anonymous comment [b] asserts that the "sages" to whom Shmuel refers are not in fact all other sages (such that R. Meir would represent an individual, minority opinion) but should be identified with R. Yose (such that we have one individual opinion opposing another). The story follows to substantiate this claim, as R. Ishmael quotes his father, R. Yose, with the same midrash that Shmuel attributes to the sages (C, "*Man* is written in the passage. But as for a woman . . .").

After the story, there appears an Amoraic disagreement over the practical law [d]. R. Ami rules that a female may perform *halitsah* in her "childhood," that is, when able to understand the implications of the act, about the age of six or seven.[62] Rava requires her to attain the age when her vows are considered valid, which is eleven.[63] The *sugya* concludes with a final ruling of the Stammaim [e], that she must have reached puberty, that is, she must be an adult, in accord with the anonymous Mishna (which, according to Shmuel, reflects R. Meir's opinion).[64]

While the *sugya* presents R. Ami as referring to the story, this is by no means necessarily the case—I have set the Stammaitic addition to his dictum in smaller font.[65] Like Rava, R. Ami simply states a ruling on the topic. Indeed, the form "From the words of R. So-and-so . . ." is rare, appearing but four other times in the Bavli, one of which is the same, "from the words of Beribbi" (bHul 57a), suggesting that it may have been transferred and spliced into R. Ami's dictum here.[66] After all, R. Ami should (or could) have said, "From the words of R. Ishmael . . ." His reference to "Beribbi" is decidedly unclear, requiring Rashi to explain how it applies, namely, that "Beribbi" indicates an eminent scholar such as R. Ishmael b. R. Yose.[67]

A fascinating divide between the Amoraic and Stammaitic strata emerges. The Stammaim followed the anonymous Mishna in ruling that only an adult female may perform *halitsah*, not a minor. All the Amoraim reject or modify the Mishna's ruling. Thus, Shmuel passes off the Mishna as

the individual opinion of R. Meir and presents the consensus of the sages—hence the normative law—as the opposite. R. Ami essentially agrees with the force of Shmuel's statement, perhaps limiting the age of the minor to about six or seven. Rava likewise agrees that a minor can perform *halitsah* but requires her to be eleven.[68]

Within the *sugya*, the story essentially functions to support the Stammaitic ruling by neutralizing Shmuel's assertion. Shmuel overturns the Mishna by presenting it as the individual opinion of R. Meir and claiming that the consensus of sages disagreed and allowed a minor to perform *halitsah*. The Stammaim in turn overturned Shmuel by claiming—through the story—that these "sages" are really the individual opinion of R. Yose. The motivation for this move is clear: the Stammaim wished to rule like the anonymous Mishna, as evident from the concluding comment in the *sugya*. But it was problematic to do so in light of Shmuel's dictum, which presents the Mishna as a minority view. It was much more palatable for the Stammaim to rule in accord with one Tanna (R. Meir) against another Tanna (R. Yose) than to rule with an individual Tanna against the majority opinion of the sages. As in many other cases, here the Stammaitic ruling follows the Mishna—the authority of the Mishna vis-à-vis *baraitot* and Amoraic dicta appears to have grown by Stammaitic times. Now, it must be conceded that the story, by having Rabbi act in accord with R. Yose's ruling, could be taken as evidence that the normative law follows that opinion. But, since most post-Talmudic jurists ruled in accord with the final anonymous comment [e] and the anonymous Mishna, despite the story, I assume that the Stammaim held the same point of view.[69]

If this is the case—that the story was inserted, at least in part, to neutralize Shmuel's dictum—we must still ask why *this* particular story was created. While this question cannot be comprehensively answered, the parallel Yerushalmi *sugya* provides some insight. To mYev 12:4, the Yerushalmi comments as follows:

> [A] R. Ishmael b. R. Yose asked before Rabbi [Yehuda HaNasi]: What differentiates a minor male (who may not perform *halitsah*) from a minor female (who may perform *halitsah*)?
>
> [B] He said to him: *Man* is written in the passage (Deut. 25:7–10). But here [it states] *His brother's widow shall go up to him (Deut 25:9)*—it is all the same [whether adult or minor] (*mikol maqom*).
>
> [C] R. Mana said [the following] without attributing it [to another sage]. R. Yitshaq b. R. Hiyya brought [the following] in the name of R. Yona: [This opinion]

is that of R. Meir, who said: "One may not perform *halitsah* or *yibbum* with a minor female lest she [later] be found to be an *ailonit* [= a woman incapable of procreation]."[70]

According to Epstein, the version of this Mishna before the Yerushalmi differed from that of the Bavli. It concluded "is valid" rather than "not valid," that is, that, while a girl should not perform *halitsah*, if she does so and fails to perform it again as an adult, it is nonetheless valid (whereas according to the Bavli's version, *halitsah* with a girl is not valid after the fact).[71] In any case, here R. Ishmael asks why the law differs, in that a minor male may not perform *halitsah*, and Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi responds with a midrash halakha similar to that of the Bavli. At [C] two Amoraim claim that this Mishna reflects the individual opinion of R. Meir, and not necessarily the consensus of sages, adducing another source.

The dialogue between R. Ishmael b. R. Yose and R. Yehuda HaNasi here resembles that of the Bavli story, although the positions are reversed, with R. Ishmael asking the question and R. Yehuda HaNasi providing the midrash halakha. The dictum ascribed to the PT Amoraim at [C] parallels Shmuel's dictum in the Bavli associating the Mishna with R. Meir [a].[72] The Bavli redactors composed the *sugya* by adding to these two elements dicta of two Amoraim, R. Ami and Rava (d) and the Stammaitic halakhic materials noted above. The Yerushalmi *sugya* therefore is closely related to the Bavli *sugya* to the same Mishna.

The Stammaim apparently used the dialogue between R. Ishmael b. R. Yose and R. Yehuda HaNasi from the PT *sugya* as the kernel for a story, to which they added the familiar motif of shame in the academy and the building blocks identified above. Obviously, there is much more we would like to know and this history of the tradition is fragmentary, to say the least, but we do gain some insight into how the Stammaim reworked earlier bits of tradition into colorful new creations.[73] We should also note the fascinating fluidity between halakha and aggada of the sort discussed in the Introduction. A brief halakhic interchange in the PT becomes an element in a highly developed aggadic narrative. That narrative—if the above analysis is correct—in turn serves a halakhic function with the *sugya*.

APPENDIX: MANUSCRIPT VARIANTS

Only major variants are listed here. Manuscript sigla are from Sokoloff, *DJBA*, 57: Munich 95 = M; Vatican 111 = V^3; Munich 141 = M^3; Moscow, Lenin 594 = Mo^1; Oxford, Opp. 248 (367) = O^2. Orthographic variants are not listed. Full variants can

be found in *Diqduqei soferim hashalem: The Babylonian Talmud with Variant Readings: Tractate Yevamoth*, ed. A. Liss (Jerusalem: Yad Harav Herzog, Institute for the Complete Israeli Talmud, 1986), 3:125–28.

[A1]: ". . . were sitting." M^3, Mo^1 add "A word came forth from them."

[A1]: "When one prays . . . upward. . . . When one prays . . . downward." M^3, V^3, Mo^1 reverse the order: ". . . downward . . . upward."

[A1]: ". . . eyes upward . . . eyes downward." M^3 reads "eyes downward . . . heart upward"; O^2 reads "heart upward . . . eyes downward."

[B1]: "ran": illegible in M. Same reading in M^3. Mo^1, O^2, V^3 read "went."

[B1] "as he went": V^3 omits. O^2 reads "as he came."

[(B1(1)]: "From Rabbi": O^2 omits.

[B1(2)]: "the Almighty" (*gevurah*). O^2 reads "the Presence" (*shekhinah*).

[B2]: "He [Rabbi] received." M^3 reads "Rabbi received."

[C]: "came before him." M^3, Mo^1, O^2 read "came to perform *halitsah*."

[C]: "Go out and check her." M^3, Mo^1, O^2 read "Go and check." V^3 reads "Go out, inquire, and check."

[C]: "After he went out": M^3, Mo^1 read "He went to check her. When he went out."

[C]: "whether a minor [or an adult]." M^3, Mo^1 read "whether a minor or an adult." O^2 reads "whether an adult or a minor."

[D1]: "Come [back]. You are not needed." M^3, Mo^1, O^2 read "Sit in your place," omitting "You are not needed."

[D3]: "Stand." M^3, Mo^1, O^2 read "Sit."

[D5]: "embarrassed Abdan." O^2 reads "repaid Abdan."

Chapter 3

Ilfa's Desperate Challenge (Taanit 21a)

From the center of the academy we move to the periphery with the story of Ilfa and his desperate challenge. Set outside the academy, the story is nevertheless dominated by academic concerns. Indeed, the story is among the few sources that allude to the process of the selection of the head of the academy.[1] The following translation is based on ms Oxford 366.

[A1] Ilfa and R. Yohanan were in extreme need.[2] They said, "Let us rise, go and busy ourselves with commerce, and let us fulfill of ourselves [the verse], *There shall be no needy among you (Deut 15:4)*." They went. They sat down under a certain unsound wall.

[A2] While they were eating a meal, R. Yohanan heard one angel say to his fellow, "Come, let us cast it down upon them and kill them, for they abandon eternal life and busy themselves with temporal life." The other [angel] said to him, "Leave them be. One of them has a propitious horoscope."[3]

[A3] R. Yohanan said to Ilfa, "Did you hear anything?" He said to him, "No." He said [to himself], "This means that I am the one with a propitious horoscope. I will return and go and fulfill of myself the verse, *For there will never cease to be needy ones in your land (Deut 15:11)*."

[B1] By the time Ilfa came [back], R. Yohanan was leading [the academy] (*malakh*). When Ilfa came, they (the students) said to him, "Had you sat and studied, would you not be leading [the academy]?"[4]

[B2] He [Ilfa] went and suspended himself on the sailyard of a ship.[5] He said, "If anyone asks me a question regarding [the *baraitot*] of the school of R. Hiyya

and the school of R. Oshaya[6] and I do not explain it to him on the basis of our Mishna,[7] I will throw myself from the sailyard of the ship and drown in the river."

[B3] A certain old man came and recited to him [the *baraita*]:

[a] One who says [to the trustees for his estate], "Give my children a shekel per week [for their support]," but [it turns out that] they need a *sela* [= two shekels], they [the trustees] give them a *sela*.

[b] But if he says, "Only give them a shekel," then they [the trustees] only give them a shekel.

[c] If he said, "When my children die, let others inherit in their place," then whether he said "Give [a shekel per week]," or whether he said "Only give [them a shekel]," they [the trustees] only give them a shekel.

[B4] [Ilfa said to him]. "Whose [opinion] is this? It is R. Meir, who held, 'It is a commandment (*mitsvah*) to carry out the wishes of the deceased'" [= mKet 6:7].[8]

Literary Analysis

The story divides into two halves, A and B, each narrating events of a different time. In A, Ilfa and R. Yohanan depart from the academy, leaving behind the world of Torah. In B, many years later, Ilfa returns from the outside world to the academy.[9]

Part A focuses on R. Yohanan, despite the story's beginning with Ilfa's name, which indicates that he is the protagonist of the story as a whole. Although the exposition describes the two sages acting together, in the subsequent sections (A2–A3) Ilfa does nothing except respond in the negative to his companion's question. R. Yohanan, on the other hand, hears the angels, asks Ilfa a question, and resolves to return. In B, Ilfa is the protagonist, while R. Yohanan ceases even to function as an acting character. The sole mention of R. Yohanan appears in the narrator's brief statement that he became head of the academy in the interim (B1). But even this datum serves primarily to motivate Ilfa's actions.

The first half of the story delineates two possible paths for the sages, an either-or choice between Torah and commerce. R. Yohanan ultimately opts to return to the academy and the study of Torah, while Ilfa abandons the

academy to engage in commerce. Each path correlates with fulfillment of a biblical verse: Torah with the poverty described in Deut 15:11; commerce with the subsistence depicted in Deut 15:4. The stock phrase cited by the angel, "they abandon eternal life and busy themselves with temporal life," presents the choice as between not mere alternatives but opposing paths: the eternal life in the next world bestowed by Torah versus temporal life in this world laboring in commerce. The choice for the "temporal life" of commerce almost causes the sages' death; the future success in the life of Torah saves their lives. Though not designated explicitly as such, the two angels appear to function as a pair of opposites, angel of justice and angel of mercy, or angel of destruction and angel of life. Thus, the first half of the story sets forth a series of oppositions:

Ilfa	Yohanan
Commerce	Torah
Outside world	Academy
Subsistence	Poverty
Temporal Life	Eternal Life
Deut 15:4	Deut 15:11
Angel of justice/destruction	Angel of mercy/life

In light of these oppositions it is possible to interpret this half of the story as a rather straightforward account of two sages faced with identical, difficult circumstances, one of whom makes the right decision, one the wrong decision. From the angelic interchange we know that to leave the academy is a poor choice or even a sin. R. Yohanan hears the conversation by virtue of the fact that he has a propitious horoscope, that is, he is destined for greatness, the very reason that inspires the angels to spare their lives; Ilfa's life, we are to understand, is spared vicariously because of his colleague's merit. R. Yohanan reverses course and models the straightforward didactic point for the audience: choose Torah and poverty over commerce and subsistence. With this reading, the bipartite structure—the first half about R. Yohanan, the second about Ilfa—would support the moral of the correct choice versus the wrong choice.

What complicates the story and makes this interpretation problematic is the information accessible to R. Yohanan alone. He, not Ilfa, hears the angelic conversation. His inference seems plausible: he, not Ilfa, is the one destined for great success; his fortune, not that of Ilfa, saves their lives; hence he, not Ilfa, should return to the academy. We might add another opposition to those delineated above: R. Yohanan has a propitious *sha'a*

(horoscope; literally, "hour"), while Ilfa, lacking a propitious horoscope, understandably chooses temporal *sha'a* (life).[10] Thus, this is not really a straightforward story about two men confronting the identical, difficult situation and facing the same choice. R. Yohanan's situation in fact differs from Ilfa's, and because of that difference, he realizes that the correct choice *for him* is to return. The question of the correct choice for Ilfa becomes less clear. Two interpretations are plausible: (1) It would also be the correct choice for Ilfa to return to his studies. He too should never have abandoned the "eternal life" of Torah, even if he will not achieve future greatness, but only mediocrity. Although he does not overhear the angels (because he lacks a "propitious horoscope") and has no way of knowing that he has made the wrong choice (since, apparently, R. Yohanan did not inform him of the angelic conversation[11]), the audience understands his error thanks to the omniscient narrator. (2) Ilfa made a reasonable, or at least defensible, choice, as he has no great destiny in the academic world. That is why he could not hear the angels. And that is why the angels also spare Ilfa despite the fact that he will not achieve future greatness.

An additional factor complicating the interpretation is that the angel menaces the sages specifically when they rest under (beside or in the shade of) an unsound wall.[12] The unsound wall or house (*ashita ra'u'a/beita ra'u'a*), a frequent Bavli motif, is that one who freely puts himself in a dangerous place risks being punished for his sins, as will be discussed at length below.[13] Satan, the angel of death, demons, and other such powers seize the opportunity to strike when a human makes himself vulnerable. Why does the angel not suggest killing the sages as they first leave the academy, or while they travel, or when they rest to eat under a *sound* wall? Rav Rehumei, for example, having failed to return from the academy on the day designated for his annual visit, thus causing his wife great pain, "was sitting on a roof; the roof collapsed under him and he died" (bKet 62b). No unsound wall or building here—Rav Rehumei was severely punished for causing his wife to suffer. Apparently the "sin" of abandoning Torah study due to poverty is relatively minor, and not sufficient to warrant retribution were it not for their precarious position. That is, had they not inadvertently reposed beside an unsound wall, they could have gone about their lives without impairment. This does not necessarily deny that the sages made the inferior choice or committed some sort of peccadillo. But the Bavli is quite candid about the sins and failings of sages, and we need not expect R. Yohanan and Ilfa to have differed. Indeed, in the proximate stories of this *sugya* we learn that Rav, Shmuel, and Rav Huna took care not to pass under unsound walls or houses for fear the structures would fall upon them, and

none of them abandoned Torah study due to poverty (see below under "Redactional Context.") All sages—save those "holy men" with supererogatory merit and miracle-working capabilities—risk death by positioning themselves beside unsound walls. In other words, the use of the "dangerous place" motif causes us to view Ilfa and R. Yohanan as typical sages, rather than sinful or failed sages.[14]

These considerations—that only R. Yohanan hears the voice, that only one of them has a "propitious horoscope," and the "dangerous place" motif—weaken the oppositions delineated above. It becomes less clear, first, that abandoning Torah study due to poverty is a cardinal sin and, second, that Ilfa made the wrong choice and R. Yohanan the right one.

The second half of the story begins by satisfying the expectations of the audience, but immediately shifts gear (B1). Apparently many years have passed—enough, at any rate, for R. Yohanan to have climbed the academic hierarchy and become head of the academy. As expected, he fulfils the "propitious horoscope" divulged by the angel. But the students' (assuming the impersonal "they said" should be attributed to the students or functionaries of the academy) statement to Ilfa that he, not R. Yohanan, would have been heading the academy had he remained shatters our expectations (B2). (How they know this is by no means clear, but that issue does not seem to concern the storyteller.[15]) This stunning revelation forces the audience to reconsider its understanding of the first half of the story. Was Ilfa, and not R. Yohanan, the sage with the "propitious horoscope" to become head of the academy? Did he, tragically, lose his opportunity by making the wrong choice and failing to return to his studies?

The denouement complicates matters further. Ilfa makes a most dramatic challenge in order to demonstrate his mastery of Torah. The figure of a sage suspending himself from a sailyard of a ship would appear to be rife with symbolism, though it is difficult to determine the precise sense of the image. In part the storytellers may be playing on the name *ilfa,* which means "boat" in Aramaic; such thematic connections between names and stories are common in the Bavli.[16] The ship may also be the type of business Ilfa pursued or a general symbol of commerce. Ilfa indicates that, despite engaging in a maritime trade, he did not neglect his studies. At all events, by meeting the challenge, Ilfa demonstrates amazing proficiency in Torah. To be able to correlate a *baraita* with the corresponding Mishnaic tradition requires both encyclopedic knowledge of the Mishna, as a sage must be intimately familiar with the entire Mishna to guarantee that he will identify the correct source, and analytical brilliance, as he must understand the underlying logic of both the *baraita* and all Mishnas in order to determine the appropriate

connection. It turns out, then, that *despite* Ilfa's dedication to commerce, he has by no means "forsaken eternal life." His commercial activities do not seem to have impeded his studies at all, as he achieved vast and deep knowledge while engaging in business. He also displays the kind of confidence and courage and willingness to answer questions that one would probably expect from the head of the academy. Perhaps he even wishes to demonstrate that his knowledge is superior to that of R. Yohanan: not only has he continued to study Torah, but he continues to be the greater scholar, contrary to the expectations of these students.

This ending collapses the oppositions set forth in the first half of the story and lends support to the more complex interpretative possibilities sketched above. For Ilfa can hardly be said to have "abandoned eternal life and busied himself with temporal life." Quite clearly he devoted tremendous energy to the pursuit of Torah. Indeed, Ilfa survives his ordeal in the dangerous place atop the sailyard by virtue of his Torah, whereas he almost lost his life in the dangerous place beneath the rickety wall because he seemed to abandon Torah. And he successfully reconciles two rabbinic sources, not unlike R. Yohanan, who adduced two contrasting biblical verses to justify his departure from the academy and his return. True, Ilfa did not become head of the academy, as did R. Yohanan. But the angels did not gripe: "he abandons the path that leads to becoming head of the academy and busies himself merely in becoming a great sage." Commerce and Torah study are by no means mutually exclusive.

The students' telling Ilfa that had he stayed he would be heading the academy rather than R. Yohanan likewise prompts the audience to reconsider the first half of the story. Does this mean that Ilfa was the sage who had a "propitious horoscope" and for whom the angels spared the sages' lives? Above we interpreted the fact that R. Yohanan alone heard the voice to indicate that he was the sage with a "propitious horoscope." Is it possible that R. Yohanan simply chanced to overhear the angels because he was more favorably positioned? Could it be that his deduction that he was the one with the "propitious horoscope" was errant, though it worked out well for him and poorly for Ilfa—thanks in part to the fact that R. Yohanan apparently did not inform his friend of what he heard?

These narrative tensions and ambiguities, in my opinion, cannot and should not be neatly resolved.[17] The story suggests that to cease full-time Torah study in order to earn a living is so wrong as to deserve capital punishment, yet it suggests that earning a living need not entail the cessation of Torah study. Commerce must come at the expense of Torah study, on the one hand, but is compatible with Torah study, on the other. Sages

should not abandon the academy, but they can achieve prodigious mastery of Torah outside.

The internal tensions result from the fact that the story deals with an insoluble problem of rabbinic culture. To insist that all men engage in full-time Torah study is simply not realistic, as there will be insufficient material support. Some will inevitably have to "abandon eternal life" so as not to starve. Aspiring sages whose parents or in-laws or wives could not support them would have little choice but to work in order to provide for themselves and their families.[18] Who could find fault with a sage who had to work in order to survive? On the other hand, Bavli storytellers could not but condemn those who left behind a life of Torah study, the highest value in the rabbinic worldview, for a mundane job. And there would always be uncertainty: was the sage really in such need or was he pursuing earthly riches at the expense of spiritual values? To earn enduring merit required a life of dedication and self-sacrifice, and personal hardships were to be expected. Any given individual could be encouraged to persevere, suffer a little, depend on communal charity while he continued to study. But this strategy clearly would not work on a large scale, and even on a limited basis it requires reasonably prosperous communities. While R. Yohanan, we are to understand, depended on charity for his subsistence, it is not clear that Ilfa and many other students could have done the same. The story thus expresses some of the tensions that confront sages and offers several perspectives on the various possible choices. It encourages sages to appreciate the different sides of the problem without offering clear guidance or a facile solution.

This broader cultural context of subsistence versus Torah study is widespread in the Bavli, and finds expression in many other sources. For example, the story of R. Shimon b. Yohai and the cave, which I discussed at length in *Talmudic Stories*, describes R. Shimon and his son, who emerge after twelve years of hiding in a cave and see peasants farming and tilling the land (bShab 33b). In an obvious intertextual link to our story, they observe, "they abandon eternal life and busy themselves with temporal life," and then destroy the farmers with a fiery gaze: "everywhere they turned their eyes was immediately burned." At this point a heavenly voice orders them back into the cave, which the sages understand to be a type of punishment for their destructive behavior. Upon reemerging a year later, they moderate their uncompromising standards. Here, too, those who "choose" to engage in earning a living, albeit subsistence farming, are judged to be deserving of death by the sages. While the story as a whole rejects this perspective, and while it is not the focus of this narrative, again we see the tension between

the need to earn a living and the exalted life of study, the path championed by Shimon b. Yohai and his son.[19] To mention one other relevant source, Rava reportedly instructed his students: "I ask you not to appear before me in the month of Nisan and in the month of Tishrei, in order that you not be distracted by concern for your sustenance during the rest of the year" (bBer 35b).[20] This practical advice shows an understanding of the realistic needs of the full-time Torah student, and awareness that such a concern could otherwise dominate his life. That many more such sources from elsewhere in the Bavli can be adduced points to a persistent cultural problem.[21]

Tradition History

The tradition history of this story offers an instructive example of the construction and transformation of rabbinic narratives. The earliest attested version is that of yQid 1:1, 58d:

> Hilfai said, "Place me on the bank of a river. If I cannot derive the *baraitot* of R. Hiyya the Great from our Mishna, throw me into the river."
>
> They said to him, "Behold, R. Hiyya taught: *A sela is four dinars*." He said to them, "So too we have taught it [in the Mishna]: *How deficient may a sela be without there being overcharging* [ona'a]*? R. Meir says: Four isars, one isar per dinar [= mBM 4:5].*"
>
> They said to him, "Behold, R. Hiyya taught: . . ." He said to them, "So too we have taught it [in the Mishna]."

There follow three more such questions (five altogether), all concerning monetary equivalents. As in our Bavli story, Hilfai/Ilfa offers to demonstrate his proficiency in Torah by equating laws found in the *baraitot* of R. Hiyya's collection with the equivalent teachings in the Mishna. (As is well known, the name חלפי in the PT regularly appears as אלפא in the BT.) So confident is he of his knowledge that he agrees to be thrown into the river should he fail the challenge. He successfully answers five queries pertaining to monetary values.[22]

An additional challenge is mentioned in a second account of this episode found in yKet 6:7, 30d–31a. In the Yerushalmi's discussion of Mishna Ketubot 6:7 we find a version of the same *baraita* cited in the Bavli story of R. Yohanan and Ilfa, though it is cited in a more complete form (= tKet 6:10). The Yerushalmi reads as follows:

[a] One who says [to the trustees for his estate], "Give my children a shekel per week [for their support]," but [it turns out that] they need a *sela* [= two shekels], they [the trustees] give them a *sela*.

[b] But if he says, "Only give them a shekel," then they [the trustees] only give them a shekel.

[d] And for the sustenance of his wife and his daughters, whether he says "Give" or "Only give," he [the trustee] gives them a shekel.[23]

[e] It was taught: Rabban Shimon b. Gamaliel says: R. Meir used to say: One who says [to the trustees for his estate], "Give my children a shekel per week [for their support]," but [it turns out that] they need a *sela,* they [the trustees] only give them a shekel, and the rest of their need is supplied from charity. But the sages say, "They [the heirs] continue to collect until the estate is depleted, and the rest is supplied from charity."

[f] R. Yose said: That [section e] resolved Hilfai's question. He said: "Place me on the bank of a river. If I cannot derive the *baraitot* of R. Hiyya the Great from our Mishna, throw me into the river." What did he say? *Let the trustee do that with which he was charged [= mKet 6:7].*

Here R. Yose recounts yet another question [f] that was posed to Hilfai in response to his challenge, in addition to those questions mentioned in yQid 1:1, 58d. He was asked about R. Meir's opinion in this *baraita* (section [e]) and coordinated it with R. Meir's opinion in mKet 6:7. (I have skipped from [b] to [d] here because the Yerushalmi displaces section [c] of tKet 6:10 and discusses it later. This displacement is of little concern for the present purposes.)

This brief narrative is clearly parallel to the concluding scene of our Bavli story, but reads much more smoothly for three reasons.

First, Ilfa coordinates two sources explicitly attributed to R. Meir: section [e] of the *baraita* and mKet 6:7, which reads, "'Let the trustee do that with which he was charged': These are the words of R. Meir."[24] This Mishna deals with the case of a man who directs a trustee to support his married daughter. In both sources the trustee must do exactly what he was instructed and may not deviate for any reason. The parts of the *baraita* preserved in the Bavli ([a]–[c]) do not mention R. Meir explicitly.

Second, the nature of the correlation works out much better in the Yerushalmi. There is an explicit disagreement between R. Meir in [e] and the

anonymous opinion at [a], which rules that we do not follow the testator's directive to the letter. The reason behind this opinion is that we understand the testator to have intended to spur the heirs to be thrifty, to encourage them to get by with one shekel per week, but not to have intended that they should be deprived if they really need more. However, even according to this opinion, if the testator specified "Only give" as in [b], he intended them to have but a shekel even if they require more. For R. Meir [e], on the other hand, there is no difference how he formulated his directive: "Let the trustee do that with which he was charged." Everything is clear.

The Bavli, however, lacks section [e] of the *baraita*, so Ilfa cannot be coordinating this section with the Mishna. We are therefore forced into one of two difficult explanations. We can explain that Ilfa identifies sections [b] and/or [c] as the opinion of R. Meir that correlates with R. Meir's statement in the Mishna.[25] If we do so, we must also explain that the sages would disagree with [b–c] and rule in these cases, too, that the trustee must give the heirs what is necessary, just as in [a]. Yet these opinions [b–c] are not attributed to R. Meir explicitly, and no such dissenting opinion attributed to the sages is attested. Moreover, to attribute [b–c] to R. Meir and [a] to the sages is forced, as nothing distinguishes the tradent of [b–c] from [a].[26] Alternatively, we could explain that Ilfa means to identify the entire *baraita* ([a], [b], and [c]) as the opinion of R. Meir. But this is difficult, because in section [a] the trustee does *not* do that with which he is charged.[27] At all events, in light of the full version of the *baraita* attested in the Tosefta and Yerushalmi, both explanations are all but impossible. From section [e] we learn that R. Meir explicitly disagrees with the opinion in [a], and hence that all agree on [b].

Third, in the Yerushalmi, Ilfa/Hilfai quotes the very words of the Mishna ("Let the trustee do that with which he was charged.") He does exactly what he promises to do: correlate a Mishna with the corresponding *baraita*. In the Bavli, however, Ilfa does *not* actually quote a Mishna! He cites R. Meir as saying "It is a commandment to carry out the wishes of the deceased."[28] This formulation in fact derives from a Bavli *baraita* cited in bGit 14b. It is the more abstract principle which the Bavli attributes to R. Meir as his underlying rationale: Why should the trustee not deviate at all from his instructions? The reason is, because "It is a commandment to carry out the wishes of the deceased." In the Bavli, then, Ilfa correlates a *baraita* not with the Mishna but either with another *baraita*, in which case his answer stands in some tension with his promise to correlate the *baraitot* of R. Hiyya with the Mishna, or with the (purported) underlying rationale of an opinion

in the Mishna (given explicit expression elsewhere in a *baraita*), which requires additional explanation to make sense of the response.[29]

Thus, the Bavli changed the account of Ilfa's challenge for the worse (or at the least for the more confusing) due to, first, the incomplete version of the *baraita* transmitted in Babylonia and, second, the Bavli's propensity to substitute more abstract formulations for casuistic rulings.[30]

Besides these differences regarding the sources of the challenge and Ilfa's response, the tradition has been reworked in two other respects.

First, in the Yerushalmi Hilfai/Ilfa offers to be thrown into the river, not to jump from a ship's mast and drown. While we cannot be sure that he knew how to swim, nothing suggests that he was speaking of mortal danger. He simply risked the humiliation of being tossed in the water upon failing to live up to his challenge. Even if his boast in the Bavli should be taken as rhetoric, not as an actual commitment to suicide, it is still much more dramatic. This change may simply have resulted from the well-attested tendency for drama in the Bavli. It may also be due in part to the name "Ilfa," which, as noted above, means "boat" in Babylonian Aramaic. Here the process worked in reverse when compared to the norm: the storytellers transformed an element of the story on the basis of the name of the protagonist, rather than choosing the name on the basis of the content.[31] In addition, the description of Ilfa's dramatic posturing, "he suspended (*tala*) himself" on the mast of a ship, appears to be a Bavli motif of sorts. A brief narrative in bSuk 52a relates that Abaye followed an unmarried man and woman who set forth together on a journey, his intent being to prevent them from sinning. When the sage beheld the two bid each other farewell without incident, he ruefully observed that, in the same situation, he himself would not have been capable of refraining from sin. Thereupon, "he went and leaned against (*tala nafshei*) a door bolt and felt distressed. A certain old man came and taught to him: The greater the man, the greater his inclination." That the sage adopts such a posture out of anguish is stated explicitly in this story but is clear enough in Ilfa's case to render explicit description unnecessary. Similarly, in bHag 15b, "Shmuel came upon Rav Yehuda leaning against a door bolt (*tali be'ibra dedasha*) and crying." Rav Yehuda was very upset because he had been pondering the implications of the fact that the great sages Doeg and Ahitofel ultimately lost their share in the world to come, opining, "What will become of us?" Ordinary sages must be even more vulnerable to sin and perdition, reasons Rav Yehuda.[32] The Bavli storytellers in this way have recast Ilfa's challenge into more familiar literary terms, but instead of the posture taking place beside a door, which would have no place near a river,

the storytellers locate it at the mast of a ship. Thus, the verb *tala* takes on its more literal meaning, to suspend or hang (suspended himself on the mast of the ship), rather than lean or adhere to (leaned against the door bolt).

Second, the anonymous "they" who posed the questions to Hilfai in yQid 1:1, 58d becomes "a certain old man" in the Bavli. This anonymous "old man" (*hahu saba*), typically a sage or sagelike figure, is a stock character in Bavli sources. He appears in many stories, including the aforementioned account of Abaye at bSuk 52a, which in fact contains the same formula, "a certain old man came and taught to him."[33] Similarly, in bMen 37a, a man tells Rabbi that he sired a son with two heads and asks how much he owes the priest to redeem the son. The passage continues: "a certain old man came and taught to him . . . ," again the exact formula that appears in our story. Here, as in many briefer discussions between sages, the "certain old man" supplies the answer to an halakhic or exegetical question, often citing an halakhic or midrashic source. In bBer 42b–43a, following Rav's death, his disciples discuss a question relating to the grace after meals. They are unable to solve it "until a certain old man came. He contrasted a Mishna with a *baraita* and explained . . . ."[34] Our storytellers mobilize the "certain old man" to provide the question for Ilfa, rather than the answer, as is more typical, but they draw on the same stock character.

In sum, this tradition underwent a fascinating development from its earlier form in the PT due to (1) the incomplete version of the *baraita* (= tKet 6:10) transmitted in Babylonia; (2) the Bavli's propensity to translate casuistic rulings into abstract principles and formulations which are then put in the mouths of the Tannaim themselves, as if they articulated the abstractions; (3) the redactors' love of drama and embellishment, perhaps combined with their proclivity for paronomasia (*ilfa* = boat); and (4) the use of Bavli motifs and stock characters that serve specific functions. All four are well-attested phenomena.

From Yerushalmi Ketubot the tradition seems to have passed to Bavli Ketubot 69b–70a, which contains an exact parallel to the final two sections of our story, the account of Ilfa's challenge (B2–B3). In bKetubot the story is preceded by a brief halakhic *sugya* that is roughly parallel to the *sugya* that precedes the story in yKetubot. This and the fact that the story in bKetubot is well-integrated into the proximate halakhic discussion suggest that bKetubot was its original location, from which it was transferred to bTaanit, rather than the reverse.[35]

Later storytellers probably constructed the version found in bTaanit by creating and adding the first half, the account of R. Yohanan and Ilfa leaving the academy [A1–B1] to the tradition of Ilfa's challenge. They sought

to fill the massive narrative gap of *why* Ilfa did what he did, which is not explained in either of the two Yerushalmi passages or in bKetubot. What provoked Ilfa's bizarre act? That he simply wished to show off his intellectual prowess apparently was not a satisfactory explanation for the Bavli storytellers, especially after the transformation of the consequence of failure from being thrown into the river to jumping from a mast and drowning. Moreover, this explanation of his challenge—though the most plausible in my opinion—is not explicit. The storytellers thus provide a narrative motivation for Ilfa's extreme action which is plausible (for them!) and which simultaneously grapples with a significant tension of their culture.[36] Below we will speculate as to why and how they composed this particular account to close the narrative gap.

Sources, Stock Phrases, and Motifs

If the tradition developed along the lines sketched above, then the Bavli storytellers composed the first half of the story (A1–B1) to go along with the reworked tradition of Ilfa's challenge that originated in the PT. The sources of the first half of the story cannot be reconstructed precisely, but a few building blocks can be identified:

1. "*were in extreme need*" (A1). This expression appears five other times in the Bavli (excluding parallels): bHul 132b, 133a; bBM 114b; bBB 174b (= bArkh 23a); bTa 25a. In three, perhaps four, of these sources, it is a scholar who suffers "extreme need," undoubtedly because he spends his time studying Torah and not earning a living. In bBM 114b, Elijah asks Rabbah b. Abahu why he has not studied the laws of purities. The sage responds that he hardly managed to study the main four orders of the Mishna, let alone all six, because of his "extreme need."[37] None of these sources, to the best of my knowledge, is paralleled in the PT. While full-time Torah study clearly presented the same problem of earning a living in Palestine as in Babylonia, and while some Palestinian stories address this issue, the tension seems to be thematized more prominently in the Bavli. Of course, we would expect this from the academic culture reflected in the Bavli. In the previous chapter we noted that the storytellers sometimes borrowed passages in close redactional proximity to the story, and here the instantiation at bTa 25a, a few folios distant, may have been their source.

2. *The contradiction between Deut 15:4 and 15:11* (A1, A3) is the subject of a midrash halakha found in *SifDeut* #114 (174) and #118 (177) and in

MidTan 15:4 (80).[38] This midrash halakha may have been available to the storytellers, though the tension between the verses is so obvious that they may have drawn on the Bible directly or on familiar oral traditions that addressed the issue. It should also be noted that elsewhere the Bavli justifies the ruling that a student pursue his own lost object before that of his teacher—despite the principle of "honoring one's master"—by citing Deut 15:4, understood as a command not to impoverish oneself.[39] This coheres with the initial interpretation of the sages in the story.

3. *Unsound walls.* The idea that divine punishment is particularly likely to occur in dangerous situations is a well-attested motif in rabbinic literature. The famous mShab 2:6 states that women die during childbirth because of three sins, and both Talmuds explain that the punishment occurs then, rather than at some other time, because of the inherent hazards of childbirth: in the words of the PT, "the adversary (*satan*) only instigates (*meqatreg*) in a time of danger" (yShab 2:6, 5b).[40] The PT cites several other examples, among them that one must not walk from rooftop to rooftop across a beam, even if it is sufficiently wide. Although one would not normally fall, by placing oneself in a dangerous situation one opens the door for the *satan* to act. A tradition ascribed to Rav states, "He who sits in an unsound house (*bayit meroro'a*) makes the angel of death his creditor," that is, the angel is free to "collect" payment for this man's sins then and there.[41] In bBer 55a, R. Isaac lists three things that "recall a man's sins [before heaven]," including passing under an "inclining wall" (*qir natui*).[42] An interesting parallel to the malevolent angel of our story appears in bHag 4b–5a, which recounts that the angel of death once sent his agent to take (the soul of) Miriam the Women's Hairdresser, but the agent mistakenly brought Miriam the Children's Teacher. The agent was able to take the poor woman before her appropriate time of death only because she burned herself while stoking and raking an oven, and therefore "her fortune was impaired" (*itra mezalah*).[43] Thus we see several variations of the same basic motif, and more could be adduced.[44] These three sources in particular—the unsound house, the inclining wall, and the errant angelic agent—evince strong parallels to the angels and the unsound wall of our story. The motif of the unsound wall also provides the redactional context of the story (see below).

4. "Propitious horoscope" (*qayma leih/li sha'ata*) (A2–A3). This expression is difficult. The literal meaning is: "the hour stands for him." Sokoloff translates it, "It is a propitious time for one of them,"[45] and most translators offer similar formulations. This translation is based on the con-

text and essentially follows Pseudo-Rashi, who comments, "he will become great in the future (*atid lehitgadel*)." But in bBB 12b Rashi explains, "the hour stands for him—planet (*mazal*)." Rashi here is taking "hour" as shorthand for "planteary hour" (*mazal sha'a*), a term found in bShab 156a (and elsewhere), that we discuss in Chapter 8. The planetary hour, for ancient astrologers, was the "planet" that ruled over a particular hour of the day and that consequently determined the destiny of those born under its influence. In other words, the term refers to what we would call the horoscope, the destiny determined by the "planetary hour" of one's birth. "Stands for him," the other part of the idiom, based on the context, seems to mean "propitious" or "favorable," as Sokoloff and other translators have sensed. I would render the term "propitious/favorable horoscope." The angel's statement means that one sage should be spared because his horoscope indicates that a great destiny awaits him.[46]

Rashi's source, bBB 12b, is instructive, as the portent of a sage's "propitious horoscope" also relates to his attaining the position of head of the academy:

> R. Yohanan said: "Since the day when the temple was destroyed, prophecy (*nevua*) was taken from the prophets and given to lunatics and to children." "To lunatics"—to what does this refer? Such as the [case of] Mar bar Rav Ashi, who was located in the district of Mahoza. He heard a certain lunatic saying: "The **head of the academy (*reish metivta*) who leads** (*maleikh*) in Mata Mahasia signs his name Tavyomi." He thought: "Who among all of the rabbis signs his name Tavyomi? I do! This implies that **I have a propitious horoscope** (*qayma li sha'ata*)." (Before he arrived) the rabbis voted Rav Aha of Difti to **sit at the head**. When they [the rabbis] heard that he [Mar bar Rav Ashi] was coming, they sent a pair of rabbis to consult with him. He detained them with him. Subsequently they sent another pair of rabbis. He detained them. (And so it continued.) When they completed the quorum of ten [rabbis with him], he [began] to **lead** (*malakh*), opened his discourse and taught.[47] Rav Aha said of himself: "Whoever receives poor fortune [from heaven], does not easily come into good [favor]."[48]

This is clearly a late source, as it deals with Mar bar Rav Ashi, one of the latest Amoraim (died c. 468), and therefore cannot have taken shape before the Stammaitic period. It contains terms that pertain to the structure and leadership of the academy, such as "head of the academy" (*resh metivta*), "lead" (*malakh*), and "sit at the head," pointing again to a post-Amoraic dating.

Here too the expression *qayma li sha'ata* appears in connection with a

sage who becomes leader of the academy. While in bTa 21a an angel reveals that such a destiny lies in store for a sage, here it is a lunatic's "prophecy." The nature of such "prophecy" is not completely clear to me; like the "heavenly voice" (*bat qol*) and the oracular "study-verses" recited by children, it seems to function as a mechanism to reveal something of the divine will in the age after the cessation of (biblical) prophecy. The story equates this "prophecy" of Mar bar Rav Ashi's future with the term *qayma li sha'ata*, suggesting that the term refers to one's destiny. The prophecy of the lunatic reveals what is otherwise "written" in the stars and read as a horoscope.

Now, despite the "prophecy," Mar bar Rav Ashi's rise to prominence required personal initiative and considerable gumption. Had he not maneuvered a quorum of rabbis around him and then preemptively delivered an initiatory discourse—the storytellers apparently believe that academy leaders are inaugurated in such a way—then Rav Aha of Difti would have become head of the academy. Both here and in our story, the storytellers seem to view the rise to positions of academic leadership as resulting from a combination of heavenly favor and individual effort: had R. Yohanan not changed his tack and returned to the academy, or had Ilfa returned along with him, then R. Yohanan would not have become head of the academy either.

Yet another source employs the expression *qayma . . . sha'ata* in an account of academic succession:[49]

> [A] R. Avin said: "Whoever forces the hour, the hour will force him (i.e., whoever tries to force good fortune upon himself, will experience the reverse) . . . and whoever postpones the hour [of his good fortune], the hour will wait for him."
>
> [B] Such as [the case of] Rabbah and Rav Yosef—<they had a propitious horoscope (*qayma lahu sha'ata*).>[50] They [the rabbis] sent to there [Israel]: "A 'Sinai' and an 'Uprooter of Mountains'—which of them takes precedence (to be appointed head of the Academy)?" They send [back] to them: "A 'Sinai' takes precedence, as all require the owner of wheat."[51]
>
> [C] Nevertheless, Rav Yosef did not agree to lead [the academy] (*malakh*), for the astrologers had said to him, "you will lead (*malakh*) for [only] two years."[52] Rabbah led (*malakh*) for twenty-two and one-half years, and [then] Rav Yosef led (*malakh*) for two years (bBer 64a).

Here the expression *qayma lahu sha'ata* is associated directly with becoming head of the academy and with astrologers, suggesting that Rashi cor-

rectly takes the expression to have been used in terms of the planets.[53] In Chapter 8 I will discuss in greater detail the Bavli's view of astrology and horoscopes, which did not entail the fatalism and strict determinism sometimes associated with the astrological worldview. Note that Rav Yosef, like R. Yohanan and Mar bar Rav Ashi, exercises some measure of control as to taking office and thus realizing his "destiny"—in this case delaying rather than precipitating the appointment.

While full treatment is beyond the scope of this chapter,[54] one wonders whether this expression as found in these three sources points to a Stammaitic idea regarding ascent to the position of head of the academy—that horoscopes played a role in the rise to the office or in the *post facto* justification for claiming the office. Now, in other late Bavli narratives, such as the story of the "deposition" of Rabban Gamaliel that we will discuss in Chapter 5, the position of head of the academy seems to depend in part on exalted lineage or dynastic succession, factors well-attested in the Geonic period.[55] While these could be competing ideologies, they could also be complementary if families with exalted lineages also claimed propitious horoscopes.[56]

5. "*They forsake eternal life and busy themselves with temporal life*" (A2). This expression, unattested in the PT, appears in four other Bavli narratives, including the story of R. Shimon bar Yohai and the cave, mentioned above. It epitomizes the Torah-centered worldview of the Babylonian sages, as I have discussed in *The Culture of the Babylonian Talmud*.[57] In our story, this expression suits the context best, as R. Yohanan and Ilfa literally forsake the vocation of Torah study in order to engage in commerce. And while the sages themselves feel they have good reason to do so, the more extreme worldview represented here by the angel suggests otherwise. Two BT sources even apply the expression to other aspects of religious life![58] Compared with Torah study, other mitsvot receive a derogatory evaluation that associates them with "temporal life." We have here a telling component of the Stammaitic worldview.

6. The motif of the holy sage preventing the collapse of a structure will be discussed below under "Redactional Context."[59]

If we combine our analysis of the tradition history with that of borrowed phrases and motifs, we obtain a good sense of the compositional process of this story. The redactors received a brief story from the PT and reworked it as described above, transforming several elements according to literary patterns more familiar in the Bavli. They freely composed the first half of the

story to fill the narrative gap concerning the motivation for Ilfa's challenge by drawing amply on Bavli motifs, phrases, and expressions. All in all, an outstanding example of the compositional techniques of the Stammaim.

But why create this specific account for the first half of the story rather than another? While we are clearly in the realm of conjecture, we should note the interesting parallel between the basic issue in the *baraita* posed to Ilfa and that which faces the sages in the story proper: insufficient material support.[60] The *baraita* describes what we would call a "trust fund," an arrangement to provide income to children after death. The problem is what to do if the children need more funds and cannot survive on their weekly allowance. The story deals with sages who have insufficient material support for the life of study and do not believe they can survive in such circumstances. In light of this general parallel between the scenarios, the storytellers may have taken a cue from the *baraita* when they invented the account of R. Yohanan and Ilfa.[61] They "rabbinized" the basic problem of support for children and turned it into support for sages, and more specifically, sages of the academy. As we saw in the previous chapter, here too it is worth noting the fascinating interconnections between halakha and narrative. The Bavli storytellers based their narrative expansion of an earlier, PT story in part upon a halakhic source featured therein. Even if this reconstruction is incorrect, the aggadic story features a complex halakhic issue, showing that the storytellers were intimately familiar with legal details.

Redactional Context

The story appears in bTa 21a in the Talmudic commentary to Mishna Taanit 3:4. This and the following Mishnas deal with other disasters, besides lack of rain, which mandate fasting, among them a *mapolet*, a building collapse. A related *baraita* on bTa 20b specifies that the *mapolet* refers to sturdy structures, which normally would not fall, and not to unsound structures (*re'u'ot*) or those constructed near the banks of rivers, which are prone to fall. The ensuing Talmudic *sugya* is structured primarily by four stories that mention unsound houses or walls, accompanied by typical Talmudic digressions and tangents.[62] The four stories are:

(1) "There was a certain unsound wall in Nehardea which Rav and Shmuel would not pass by . . . " The story relates that when Rav Ada bar Ahava visited them, Rav told Shmuel that they need not avoid the wall that day. Because of Rav Ada's merits it would surely not fall.

(2) "Rav Huna had wine in a certain unsound house." He wished to move it so he engaged Rav Ada bar Ahava in a discussion of Torah until the wine could be removed. At that point the house collapsed, and Rav Ada became angry, as one should not rely on miracles.

(3) "Ilfa and R. Yohanan . . . " (our story).

(4) "They said about Nahum of Gamzu that he was blind . . . ," stumped, and lame. His bed was once located in an "unsound house." When his students wanted to move it, he instructed them to remove all vessels first. They did so, and when they removed his bed, the house immediately collapsed.

The four stories involve the common theme of the holy man affording supernatural protection: his presence forestalls the collapse of an unsound wall/house on account of his merits, and all those near the holy man are spared along with him.[63] The story of R. Yohanan and Ilfa provides a slight variation of the theme when compared to the more straightforward use in the other stories. First, it is R. Yohanan's potential merit or future merit, rather than his past deeds, which obviates the collapse. Second, the deliberating angels constitute a more "personal" and complex agency than in the other stories, where the non-collapse is simply a function of the presence of the holy man, not of angels acting or refraining from acting. Third, the motif of the holy man and the unsound wall has been combined with the motif of a dangerous situation that provides an opportunity for divine punishment. The angel proposes pushing the unsound wall onto the sages *because* they abandoned their studies. This is not the natural collapse of the wall/house that happens or could happen in the other stories. In other words, Nahum of Gamzu's presence in and of itself prevents the house from collapsing upon his disciples: nothing implies that these disciples sinned and the house would have fallen on them as punishment. The more elaborate and slightly anomalous use of this motif in our story again points to the ambivalences and tensions surrounding the issue of Torah study versus earning a living in the view of the storytellers, discussed above. How to judge the choice a sage makes is no simple matter, and many factors are brought into play by the storytellers to nuance the judgment appropriately and to render both the threat and delivery plausible.

The contextualization of the story in this *sugya* thus results from the association of a common aggadic theme with the halakhic issue of collapsing buildings and ritual fasts. The proximity of the halakhic and aggadic tradi-

tions therefore does not impact the interpretation of the story as prominently in this case as it does in some other cases. Nevertheless, this contextualization emphasizes the supernatural power of the holy man (R. Yohanan) in preventing the collapse and again underscores the importance of Torah study (or future Torah study). Torah study bestowed on R. Yohanan the same capacity to prevent the collapse of unsound structures as it had on the renowned Rav Ada bar Ahava and Nahum of Gamzu. It is the true road to "eternal life" in more ways than one.

Let me briefly note that the Yerushalmi *sugya* that corresponds to that of the Bavli is almost nonexistent. In the commentary to mTa 3:5 there appears a version of the *baraita* specifying that the collapse for which mTa 3:4 requires fasting pertains to sound houses, not unsound (*merora'im*). There is no parallel aggadic *sugya* of stories about collapsing structures. Of the four main Bavli stories (see above) only the second story, the tradition about Rav Ada bar Ahava, appears in the PT. But there it is redacted in connection to mTa 3:11 (yTa 3:13, 67a [723]), as it follows another story about Rav Ada bar Ahava's success at bringing rain.[64] The entire aggadic *sugya* has been constructed by the Bavli redactors from various traditions, some found in different contexts in the PT.[65]

Conclusion

A number of considerations indicate that the story of Ilfa and R. Yohanan is the work of the Stammaim, including: (1) substantial development from its form in the PT; (2) the use of the late term *malakh* and the issue of leading the academy; (3) its affinity to another demonstrably late Bavli story, the account of Mar bar Rav Ashi becoming head of the academy; and (4) the appearance of distinct expressions such as "they abandon eternal life and busy themselves in temporal life," which reflects the extreme, Torah-centered view of the Stammaim.[66] (5) The question of material support for Torah study, though perennially a problem for sages, is framed here in terms of leaving the academy on account of poverty.

In light of its late provenance we should note one anomaly: Ilfa's proficiency is not marked by dialectical abilities, by the capacity to propound numerous "questions and answers" in the course of debate, as typically thematized in late Bavli stories.[67] We would expect a challenge along the lines of: "If anyone states an objection and I do not answer with 24 responses, I will jump in the river and drown." This peculiarity resulted from the Bavli storytellers' preserving Ilfa's challenge from the PT version—Palestinian sages esteemed the precise knowledge of traditions, not dialectical ability.[68] In

some cases the Stammaim seem to have been constrained from reworking their sources completely.[69] Yet here the PT version of Ilfa's challenge also involves a type of analytical brilliance to complement the detailed knowledge of traditions, the ability to correlate Mishnaic traditions with the relevant *baraitot*. This may have been adequate, in the eyes of the Bavli redactors, to demonstrate outstanding intellectual acumen, despite the absence of dialectics, and therefore they did not rework this section of their source.

APPENDIX: MANUSCRIPT VARIANTS

The text is that of ms Oxford, Opp. Add. Fol. 23 (366), which does not differ significantly from mss Yad Harav Herzog; London, British Museum, Harley 5508; Munich 95; and Munich 140. Ms Vatican 134 and the printings evince several more significant variants. For collation of manuscript variants, see Henry Malter, *Masekhet ta'anit min talmud bavli* (New York: American Academy for Jewish Research, 1930), 83–84.[70] The sigla (see Sokoloff, *DJBA*, 56) are: Herzog = He; Oxford = O; London = L; Munich 95 = M; Munich 140 = M^2; Vatican 134 = V^{17}. The following are a few major variants:

[A1]: "Ilfa and R. Yohanan were in extreme need:" V^{17} and the printings read "Ilfa and R. Yohanan *were studying* Torah; they were in extreme need . . . ." This addition explains what they were doing and that their poverty resulted from their full-time study of Torah.

[A2]: "Propitious horoscope." V^{17} and the printings add "R Yohanan heard, Ilfa did not hear."

[A3]: ". . . *needy ones in your land*." V^{17}, and the printings add "R. Yohanan returned. Ilfa did not return."

[B2]: "In the river." Mss He, L, M, M^2 omit. M omits "drown."

[B2]: "Of the school of R. Hiyya and the school of R. Oshaya." V^{17} reads "from the teachings of the school of R. Hiyya and R. Oshaya." (There are other minor variants for this line.)

Chapter 4

Honi's Long Sleep (Taanit 23a)

The figure of Honi the Circle-Drawer has attracted a great deal of scholarly interest on several fronts: rain-making rituals, miracle workers and their relationships to rabbis, parallels to holy men of late antique Christianity, Josephus and rabbinic literature, and literary aspects of rabbinic stories. The bulk of scholarship has focused on the accounts of Honi standing within a circle and bringing rain. Both Talmuds, however, preserve another tradition, the story about Honi and a seventy-year sleep, which has received somewhat less scholarly attention.[1] This story is particularly interesting in that it combines folkloristic motifs with the academic concerns of the Stammaim. The version of ms Oxford, Opp. Add. Fol. 23 (366) is translated here, and the main textual variants are discussed in the chapter appendix.

[A] R. Yohanan said: All his life that righteous man [Honi the Circle-Drawer] was troubled by the Scripture, *When the Lord restored those who returned to Zion we were like dreamers (Ps 126:1)*. He said [to himself], "[How could they be] in a dream for seventy years?"[2]

[B1] One day he was walking along his way when he saw a certain man planting a carob tree. He said to him, "Now a carob tree does not bear [fruit] for seventy years. Are you sure that you will live seventy years and will eat from it?" He said to him, "I found the world with carob trees. Just as my ancestors planted for me, so I plant for my offspring."

[B2] He [Honi] sat down to eat his meal. Sleep (*sheinta*) came upon him. While he slept, a mound of earth (*meshunita*) encircled him and he was concealed from sight. He slept for seventy years.

[B3] When he awoke he saw a man gathering carobs from that carob tree. He said to him, "Do you know who planted that carob tree?" He said to him, "My father's father."

[A'] He said [to himself], "Certainly seventy years [passed] in a dream!"

[C1][3] He went to his home. He said to them, "Does the son of Honi the Circle-Drawer yet live?" They said to him, "He is no more, but his grandson lives." He said to them, "I am he [Honi]." They did not believe him.

[C2] He went to the study house. He heard the sages saying, "Our traditions are as clear today as in the years of Honi the Circle-Drawer. For when he entered the study house, he solved every difficulty of the sages." He said to them, "I am he." They did not believe him, and they did not treat him with the honor that he deserved. He prayed for mercy and his soul departed.

[D] Rava[4] said, "Thus people say, 'Either fellowship or death.'"[5]

Literary Analysis

Dividing this story into three components greatly facilitates its analysis. B1–B3 is a folktale. There is nothing particularly Jewish about it, and there are copious parallels in world literature. A and A' provide a Jewish and rabbinic frame for the folktale. The tale is presented as the application of a scriptural verse which recalls an event in Jewish national history. C–D is a Stammaitic supplement that co-opts, or at least reorients, the folkloristic theme to address an important issue in Stammaitic culture. The academy, its students, and dialectics are featured.

The folktale section (B1–B3) teaches the lesson of the interdependence of generations, epitomized in the interchange between Honi and the farmer (B1). Honi's question intimates that the man wastes his time and effort, as he will not live to benefit directly from the fruits of his labors. The farmer concedes, on one level, that Honi is correct, but offers a different reason for his action. He plants the tree not because he expects to eat the fruit himself but so that his progeny can eat. Each generation enjoys the bounty of the earth due in part to the efforts of previous generations, and therefore each has an obligation to future generations. It is this deeper insight into the human condition that Honi fails to grasp. Compensation in the human economy is not always immediate but is sometimes deferred in time and displaced upon one's descendants.

Sections B2–B3 authenticate the farmer's words for Honi. The miraculous sleep takes him seventy years into the future such that he witnesses the grandson eating the fruits of his grandfather's labors. Honi thus sees the truth of the farmer's lesson with his own eyes. The time lapse enables him to experience "in reality" (or surreality) that which others can only believe and trust, and which Honi evidently could not previously appreciate.

The rabbinic framing of the folktale redirects the focus of the composition [A, A']. The exposition, attributed to R. Yohanan, presents Honi as facing an exegetical difficulty. It is a verse that he does not understand, not an aspect of the human condition. Ps 126:1 says of the exiles who returned from Babylonia to Jerusalem that they were "like dreamers." In standard rabbinic chronology the Babylonian exile lasted seventy years (Jer 25:11; 29:10). Because he takes the comparison literally, not metaphorically, Honi cannot make sense of the verse. If upon returning from Babylonia the exiles were "like dreamers" waking up from their slumber, this implies that they had been literally asleep and dreaming for the entire seventy-year exile. But who stays "in a dream for seventy years"? This frame then employs the folktale for its own purpose: by sleeping for seventy years Honi learns that some people *do* remain "in a dream" for such lengthy periods of time. He thus experiences the truth of Scripture (rather than the truth of the farmer's lesson) with his own eyes and resolves his exegetical problem, "Certainly seventy years [passed] in a dream!" [A']. This interior monologue nicely echoes the interior monologue with which be posed the question in [A]. He is a type of *nimshal*, a real life application of the verse. The folktale is thereby Judaized or rabbinized in that it ultimately serves the purpose of scriptural exegesis.

Yet the integration of the folktale and the frame is somewhat awkward, as is often the case when storytellers combine two disparate sources. If we focus on the folktale, we see that it is incomplete. Upon waking from the seventy-year nap and beholding the farmer's grandson harvesting the carob, Honi does not articulate the moral of this experience, as we might expect (A'). At precisely this point Honi ought to make some remark expressing the truth of the farmer's statement or some version of this lesson, but that has been displaced in favor of Honi's learning that his literal reading of the verse need not be baffling.[6] A similar awkwardness can be seen if we focus on the framing. In theory, the composition could have proceeded directly with Honi falling asleep for seventy years (B2), waking, and observing, "Certainly seventy years [passed] in a dream!" which resolves the exegetical difficulty. That is, from the perspective of the exegetical frame, B1 and B3 could be dispensed with. This would leave the problem of how Honi realizes that he has been asleep for seventy years, a minor narrative concern that could have

been addressed without much difficulty.[7] Instead, the storytellers drew on a preexistent folktale, which nicely accounted for the lengthy slumber and Honi's realization of its duration, as he beholds the now fully grown carob tree and confirms his suspicion by determining the identity of the farmer's grandson. Yet this realization is followed not by articulation of the moral of the folktale but by the solution of the exegetical conundrum, thus producing the awkward fit. (In fact, the folktale originally may well have had an extended sleep of some other length of time. The redactors changed that length to seventy years to coordinate the folktale with the midrashic frame.)

The rest of the narrative appears to be a Stammaitic supplement that shifts again the thrust of the earlier tradition. Honi's return to his house establishes that the passing of such a length of time caused him to be unknown even to family, those who would be most likely to identify and recognize him, and adumbrates the parallel encounter in the study-house (C1–C2).[8] In both the house and the study-house the storyteller repeats Honi's futile efforts to be acknowledged: "He said to them, 'I am he.' They did not believe him." But it is in the study-house where the lack of recognition has consequences, for this study-house is clearly the Stammaitic academy, as we learn from the students' remark that assesses the academy's vitality as a function of dialectics. Because of the ability of these scholars to solve difficulties, to answer all questions or objections raised in the course of discussion, their traditions are as "clear" as in the halcyon days of previous generations. To "solve" (*mifraq*) a "difficulty" (*qushia*) as a mark of dialectical prowess appears often in Stammaitic narratives and constitutes the highest praise for a sage.[9] Propounding "objections," "solutions," "answers," and "difficulties" also serves as the means for achieving status. Those sages with the greatest such abilities sit in the front of the academy and receive the highest honors, while those with inferior skills lack respect. Because the sages whom Honi encounters do not recognize him or believe his claim to have returned, they do not show him the respect that a superb dialectician deserves. While they remember Honi as an outstanding scholar and praise his dialectical abilities, they do not treat him accordingly. His identity, not his skills, are in doubt. The lack of appropriate honor causes Honi to feel ashamed, an experience so terrifying in the shame-honor culture of the Stammaitic academy as often to be associated with death, for which Honi prays.[10]

The contrast in Honi's reaction to his reception in the two houses points to the interests characteristic of the Stammaim. Though he receives the same reaction in both—complete disbelief as to his identity—he is only disconcerted in the study-house/academy. Ironically, failure of his own descendants and household to believe him does not seem to trouble Honi; what-

ever frustration or discomfiture he does feel the storytellers do not deem worthy of note. In the study-house, however, where things really matter (to the storyellers), Honi despairs to the point of wishing for death.

The proverb ascribed to Rava ("thus people say") functions to help explain Honi's death wish. In this context, *havra*, meaning friendship or fellowship, refers to academic fellowship. So critical to a (Stammaitic) sage are his academic companions, his study-partners and colleagues in debate, that his life is empty and meaningless without them. In another well-known story, after Resh Laqish's death, R. Yohanan feels so distraught at the loss of his study-partner with whom he engaged in dialectical debate that he goes out of his mind (bBM 84a). The rabbis ultimately pray for mercy and R. Yohanan dies.[11] Here, too, Honi experiences despair upon returning to his study-house and finding that all of his colleagues have died in the interim. Honi himself has become but a memory, and clearly, not one of his former study-partners, disciples, or colleagues remains. Without his academic companions, he can no longer engage in debate and study, the very stuff of life for the Stammaim, and therefore prays for death.

The fit between the proverb and the story is not perfect, as it is specifically the lack of honor or the experience of shame that causes Honi's despair, not the lack of collegiality. At best we can explain that his study-partners and old, familiar colleagues are those who ordinarily would show Honi the appropriate honor, so that the loss of one entails the loss of the other, but clearly this reading is a little forced. Had the present-day sages but believed that Honi was Honi, they would have honored him sufficiently, though he would still lack "fellowship." On the other hand, though not honored, Honi could theoretically find "fellowship" among the present-day sages by recruiting a new study-partner and sparring in debate with any sage willing to enter the fray. The slight disjunction results from the borrowing of Rava's statement from its original context and its transfer to the story (see below). In any case, important again is the focus on the academy. The proverb is pressed into service to shed light on Honi's experience and by extension on the culture of the academy. We should also note that by ending with a proverb attributed to Rava the storytellers form a type of introduction and conclusion from Amoraic dicta, which creates a structural parallel and clear boundaries.

The seams and fissures of this composition, in my opinion, are quite prominent, and the disparate parts can be integrated only with great difficulty. We noted the tension between frame and folktale above. The Stammaitic section (C) has no real connection to the previous sections except insofar as it makes use of the seventy-year time lapse.[12] This is not to say

that the story cannot be read as a unity, and Yonah Fraenkel has made a valiant effort to do so. Fraenkel explains that Honi, a great scholar of the academy, usually receives an immediate reward for his excellent dialectical abilities—the honor and respect of his colleagues. He cannot understand why a farmer would plant a tree from which he does not receive any recompense. "It might therefore be said, figuratively, that learning is Honi's carob tree of whose fruit he eats."[13] Reading the beginning in light of the end, Fraenkel suggests that the encounter with the farmer was meant to teach the egocentric Honi the lesson that one sometimes acts selflessly and not in order to receive a reward. Fraenkel makes much of a line found in only some of the manuscripts, namely, that Honi noticed upon waking that his she-ass had given birth to broods of young.[14] For Fraenkel this emphasizes again Honi's concern for, and satisfaction in, material possessions and immediate rewards. Similarly (?), he believes that after seventy years he will still be remembered and honored in the study-house. He fails to appreciate the fact that in the intervening years other great scholars have propounded new solutions and raised different objections and have received honor for their abilities. Honi believes that Torah is unlike tree planting, in that it bestows honor both immediately and after seventy years, and dies bitter after failing to learn that the two actually have this trait in common. He has not appreciated the farmer's lesson, and "he who only plants in order to eat fruits will wish for his death when he is not accorded respect."[15] The disjunction between the two halves of this sentence, to my mind, shows that the analogy between carob trees and academic honors is strained, a product of Fraenkel's genius rather than the story. And Fraenkel must add *ex nihilo* the datum that during the interim other great scholars have propounded weighty objections such that Honi's abilities do not stand out as they once did—a possible, but by no means necessary, filling of a narrative gap. Honi, in any case, retains his intellect and status after seventy years; the problem is that the sages do not recognize or believe him and therefore do not actively show the respect that they acknowledge he deserves. As always, there is much more to Fraenkel's reading, including an insightful discussion of three examples of paronomasia, to which we could add a play on sleep (*sheinta*) and mound of earth (*meshunita*).[16] The very creativity and effort required to relate the parts reveal more the disjointed nature of the text than a unified message (and see below).

Fraenkel's analysis shows that certain affinities between the parts can be discerned with enough resourcefulness—the redactors, after all, generally attempted to integrate the sources they combined and reworked. It is perhaps worth considering the following: In the folktale, Honi does not ap-

preciate the connection between the generations; when he returns to his home and to the academy, he is unknown, a type of measure-for-measure punishment. He who could not understand the generosity of spirit required to provide for future generations will not be recognized by those very generations. Or again: he who failed to understand that future generations must be considered and respected does not receive that respect from those generations. There is an interesting parallel between Honi's encounter with the farmer's grandson and the mention of his own grandson, though it seems that Honi does not actually encounter his descendant. However, these weak connections, like those advanced by Fraenkel, underscore the composite nature of the text, a conclusion buttressed by source-criticism, to which we now turn.

Tradition History

A different version of our story appears in yTa 3:10, 66d:

> R. Yudan b. Guria[17] said: This Honi the Circle-Drawer (of the previous rainmaking story) was the grandson of Honi the Circle-Drawer who lived close to the destruction of the [first] temple. He went out to his workers in the fields. While he was there, it rained. He entered a cave. When seated, he became drowsy and fell asleep. He stayed deep in sleep for seventy years, until the temple was destroyed and rebuilt a second time. At the end of seventy years he awoke from his sleep. He went out of his cave and saw a changed world. A place that was a vineyard became an olive grove. A place that was an olive grove became a sown field. He inquired in the city. He said, "What is going on in the world?" They said to him, "Do you not know what is going on in the world?" He said to them, "No." They said to him, "Who are you?" He said to them, "Honi the Circle-Drawer." They said to him, "We have heard that when he entered the courtyard [of the temple] it became light." He entered and it became light. He applied to himself the verse, *When the Lord restored those who returned to Zion we were like dreamers (Ps 126:1)*.[18]

The common elements—the scriptural verse, the seventy-year sleep in a cave/mound, the pastoral setting, the protagonist Honi—suggest that the Bavli story is a reworking of the Yerushalmi tradition, as realized already by Moses Gaster in 1880 and seconded by other scholars.[19] A number of the transformations, particularly of the second half of the story (section C), are typical of Bavli reworkings of Palestinian traditions. The Bavli shifts the locus from the temple to the study-house, and even transforms the physical light that shone forth from Honi's presence into intellectual light that

illuminated the sages' difficulties.[20] Note that the PT version lacks all of the academic motifs: the study-house, honor, and dialectics. The Stammaim have not only "rabbinized" Honi, by changing him from a holy man who performed wonders in the temple to a sage of the study-house, but have "Stammaized" him with the description of his superb dialectical abilities. Here we have one of the more profound examples of the reworking of Palestinian traditions.

The details of the process of reworking of the first half (A–B) cannot be recovered precisely. Honi's personal experience as an exegesis of the verse works more smoothly in the PT, as he actually sleeps during the seventy-year exile and returns to (Mount) Zion, whereas in the Bavli the long sleep simply functions as a precedent from which to verify the truth of Scripture. Two changes seem to conform to common tendencies of the BT, namely the propensities to emphasize the didactic message and to enhance the dramatic tension more than the PT parallels do. These propensities may explain why the Bavli redactors replaced the account of Honi's excursion to the field and his suddenly being overwhelmed by sleep with the folktale, as the miraculous sleep is completely unmotivated in the PT. By contrast, in the Bavli sleep comes upon him so as to teach him a lesson. In this way the Bavli transforms a miracle story almost devoid of a moral into an effective didactic tale. Heightened dramatic tension results from construing the verse as a puzzle at the outset of the story and later resolving it. The PT, by contrast, has Honi recite the verse only at the conclusion of the story as a scriptural authentication of his experience, a much less engaging narrative tactic. Another significant transformation relates to the recognition or identification of Honi after his seventy-year absence. In the PT his interlocutors identify him by means of the miracle of illuminating the courtyard which he performs, and, though not stated specifically, they presumably believe him. In the BT neither the members of his household nor the students in the study-house recognize him or believe him, which ultimately leads to his despair.

The major differences can be delineated as follows:

PT	BT
miracle worker	sage
enters temple courtyard	enters study-house
produces physical light	produces intellectual light
others inquire who he is	he inquires from others
recognized by miracle (producing light)	not recognized
applies verse to himself (understands)	does not understand verse

The Bavli version is therefore a profound reworking of the PT tradition, though no more profound than the Bavli's reworkings of many other stories.

The redactors borrowed Rava's concluding (D) comment from another source. That is, Rava did not originally cite the proverb in conjunction with the story of Honi. A version of the proverb is found within a lengthy *sugya*, at bBB 16b, composed of exegetical comments on verses from the Book of Job. After several interpretations of Job 2:2, which mentions that Job's three friends immediately came to visit him when they first heard of his sufferings, Rava's statement is cited: "Thus people say, 'Either a friend (*havra*) or death, such as the friends of Job.'"[21] Some manuscripts read, "Thus people say, 'Either friends, such as the friends of Job, or death'" (and there are other minor variants).[22] While the importance of friendship fits well here, as the previous discussion praises the alacrity and sensitivity of Job's friends for their quick response, the two manuscript variants indicate that the proverb has been adapted to this context.[23] The shifting place of the clause "such as the friends of Job" points to a later addition, as does the fact that proverbs are characterized by brevity. Probably, "Either friendship/fellowship or death" was the original formulation and "such as friends of Job" was added in order to improve the fit to the context. Thus, the original context of Rava's statement is unlikely to have been Bava Batra. However, Taanit cannot be Rava's original context either, due to the tension noted above between the proverb and the story. The redactors apparently drew on a source of proverbial citations, or on the proverbs circulating in their oral milieu, and attached Rava's proverb to both *sugyot*. It is also interesting to note that the meaning of the proverb changes in the two contexts. In Bava Batra *havra* means "friend," as the discussion centers on Job's friends (*re'im*), whereas in Taanit *havra* means "colleague," an academic companion, as the story relates to Honi's scholar-colleagues in the academy.[24] As in the previous chapters, here the compositional techniques of the redactors are particularly evident.

In sum, the storytellers created this narrative from two earlier sources and an ending of their own creation. They reworked a Palestinian story of Honi that involved an exegesis of Ps 126:1 and the folkloristic motif of the seventy-year sleep by incorporating a folktale about the importance of selflessly providing for future generations. They then employed the motif of the return after many years to reflect on the social world of the academy and emphasize, as they do in other narratives, the dangers of academic shame. The pithy conclusion they added by borrowing and recontextualizing a proverb attributed to Rava.

At this point I would like to return briefly to Fraenkel's treatment of this

story, as a comparison of our readings illustrates the advantages of a method that combines literary with source-critical and redaction-critical approaches. Above I summarized Fraenkel's analysis of the main body of the story, the sections I have designated B–C. Fraenkel too was troubled by the awkward fit between the frame (A, A') and the story (B). He therefore suggested that the opening dictum, attributed to R. Yohanan (A), does not belong to the story but was a later addition mistakenly transferred from the PT version.[25] This reconstruction is problematic in that the tradition appears in all the manuscripts and text witnesses of the BT but none of the PT and nowhere else in rabbinic literature. Fraenkel accordingly adds that the transfer "took place during the main redaction of the Bavli, which demonstrates that already in that period there was a tendency to adulterate the stories of the two traditions."[26] Fraenkel also notes that the concluding proverb (D) was transferred from Bava Batra and does not belong to the story in Taanit; he prints the line in parentheses and does not discuss it at all in his reading.[27] Now, I think Fraenkel is absolutely correct in these assessments, though I would claim that such "adulteration" is simply the standard compositional techniques of the Bavli redactors, who routinely reworked (= "adulterated") Palestinian traditions. The transferring within the Bavli, of course, is also a standard redactional technique. It is nonetheless gratifying that Fraenkel, who typically ignores the role of the redactors, essentially concedes their activity in this case (even if only to jettison their contribution!).

The upshot is that Fraenkel removes sections A and D, and produces a strained reading of what remains (B–C) in an effort to read these disparate sources as a unity. Apart from the methodological problems of such a maneuver, it fails in any case to produce a viable story, for without the opening frame's reference to "that righteous man," which refers to Honi in the immediately preceding tradition in the *sugya*, the story would begin, "One day he was walking along the way . . . ," with no clue as to the identity of the protagonist until much later. Such an oblique opening with a delayed naming of the acting character is unprecedented among rabbinic stories, and essentially unworkable in oral stories of this type, which must inform the audience of the characters at the outset. Indeed, that Honi is not named in the opening of the story except in reference to the preceding source is clear evidence of the handiwork of the redactors who determined the sequence of traditions. Minimally, we must conclude that they changed the original dictum, "All the days of Honi the Ciricle-Drawer" to "All the days of that righteous man" in order to create a more integrated set of stories.[28] Maximally, we may surmise that they formulated the entire dictum (on the basis of the earlier tradition deriving from the PT) and attributed it to R. Yohanan.[29] At

all events, one cannot separate this opening from the ensuing story. We see here the prominent hands of the redactors, and it stands to reason that they reworked other parts of the story, too.

The question essentially becomes whether it is more profitable to assume (a) that Bavli stories may have been composed of disparate sources such that incongruities and inconsistencies sometimes remain despite the freedom and skill with which these traditions were reworked, or (b) that Bavli stories are completely unified entities such that all parts relate perfectly to all other parts. I would suggest that the former assumption better corresponds to what we know of the compositional techniques of the redactors and to the features of stories such as this one, where different sections do not fit together smoothly. As a general principle, we should be sensitive to source-critical and redaction-critical considerations before embarking on a purely literary reading of a story.

The reason I belabor this issue is that it points to another isomorphism between narrative and legal passages. Legal *sugyot* sometimes exhibit tensions and difficulties in the argumentation and logic that result from the redactors' having combined sources of varied provenances and different assumptions. Indeed, the primary difference in approach between academic scholarship and the premodern, traditional methods (whether of the medieval commentators or contemporary *yeshivot*) is the willingness to dissect the *sugya* into its constituent parts and the disinclination to understand it as a harmonious unity.[30] This story of Honi, the parts of which can be distinguished with relative ease, exhibits exactly this sort of dissonance. We should conclude that the same redactors are responsible.

(Multi-)Cultural Context

The cultural context of the story, the motifs of dialectics and of shame and honor within the academy, was briefly discussed above. I also mentioned the close parallel to the story of R. Yohanan and Resh Laqish, in which R. Yohanan's distress at the lack of academic companionship prompts the rabbis to pray for his death. The second half of the Honi story thus shares a great deal with the standard concerns of the Stammaitic narrative tradition.

Apart from these markers of the scholastic culture of the Stammaim, scholars have noted parallels to the theme of the lengthy sleep in both late antique and world literature. Moses Gaster pointed out certain parallels to the pseudepigraphic work *IV Baruch* (or *The Rest of the Words of Baruch*).[31] As a reward for rescuing Jeremiah from the Babylonians, Avimelekh the

Ethiopian (= Eved-Melekh, mentioned in Jer 38:7) was spared seeing the destruction of the temple. Jeremiah sent him out of the city to gather figs, and God casts upon him a sleep of sixty-six years. His awakening was a signal to Jeremiah to lead the people back from Babylonia. Harris dates this text to 136 CE (70 + 66 = 136); Robinson to 100–133 CE.[32] Gaster also refers to the "Life of Epimenides" found in Diogenes Laertes's "Lives of Eminent Philosophers" (3rd century CE).[33] Epimenides (6th century BCE), while looking for his father's sheep, fell asleep in a cave for fifty-seven years. He woke up to find a changed world. Returning to his home, he learned what had happened from his brother, by then an old man. Subsequently the Greeks considered him to be favored by the gods and solicited his help in purifying Athens from a plague. The extended sleep also appears in the early Christian martyrological tale of "The Seven Sleepers" about seven natives of Ephesus who hid in a cave to escape the persecution under Decius (249–51 CE), fell asleep, and woke up 360 years later. The parallel between Avimelekh's sleep from the destruction to the rebuilding of the temple and the Yerushalmi's story of Honi is particularly impressive. But, as in many such cases of parallel themes, while there appears to be some connection between these texts, the details of their relationships and influence are impossible to determine. Most important again is how the Stammaim appropriated the motif for their own purposes. While the Yerushalmi (and *IV Baruch*) have certainly Judaized the motif, the Bavli has rabbinized or "Stammaized" it.

In world literature and folktales the extended sleep is a well-attested motif.[34] It seems to be found in the literature of just about every culture: German, medieval English, Dutch, French, Welsh, Greek, Norse, Japanese, Chinese, Koranic, etc.[35] Scholars of American literature of course have studied the motif in relation to Washington Irving's story of Rip Van Winkle ("the most famous American Short Story"!),[36] which drew on earlier European models.[37] Here, too, though the diversity and malleability of uses of the motif are fascinating, they mainly illuminate the uniqueness of the appropriation by the Talmud.

Redactional Context

The story appears in the third chapter of Tractate Taanit in the section of Talmud that comments on mTa 3:8, the famous story of Honi standing in a circle and demanding that God grant rain. Our story follows the Bavli's version of the Mishna's rainmaking story. There follow stories of Honi's son's son, Abba Hilkiah, and his daughter's son, Hanan HaNehba, both

portrayed as "holy men" with the ability to make rain fall. There follow additional stories of extremely pious rabbis, and then stories of rabbis who tried to bring rain, not always successfully.

This context has a limited impact on the story, the link being the figure of Honi and not any substantive connection to the theme. The juxtaposition with the Mishna's rainmaking story enhances the characterization of Honi as a miracle worker, or at least a "holy man" involved in miraculous happenings, as he does not really initiate the miracle in our story. To a certain extent this juxtaposition influences the audience to view Honi in a more favorable light. In isolation, the Honi of our story can be perceived as insensitive and shallow, as less insightful and generous than the simple farmer, which is, indeed, how Fraenkel construes him. The preceding rainmaking story, however, presents Honi in a much more favorable light (despite the ambivalence regarding his impudence towards heaven), and the following stories, of his grandchildren, are decidedly positive. That Honi is not named explicitly in our story, as noted above, but mentioned as "that righteous man" of the preceding story, forges an even more direct connection to the context. Honi thus emerges as a holy, pious man from a family of such holy men.

It should be noted that the literary context in the PT differs somewhat. The corresponding story of Honi's lengthy sleep appears in about the same place (i.e., juxtaposed with mTa 3:8–3:9, the Mishna's story of Honi), though it is attributed to Honi's eponymous grandfather. This section of the PT lacks the stories of Honi's grandchildren as well as almost all stories of extremely pious rabbis and of sages who brought rain, though some such stories appear earlier in the chapter. Furthermore, the PT tradition that corresponds to the Bavli's story of Abba Hilkiah, Honi's grandson, is told of a "Pious man (*hasida*) of Kephar Imi" and appears in the first chapter of Taanit (yTa 1:4, 64b). The Bavli redactors therefore constructed a miniseries of stories about Honi and his pious descendants, out of disparate traditions, and set it within a longer collection of holy man tales. Creating familial connections between sages who are unrelated in Palestinian sources is a familiar tendency of the Bavli.[38] Here it may be primarily a mnemonic device facilitating memorization of the order of traditions in this series. At the same time, it contributes to the characterization of Honi as a pious, miracle-working holy man.

APPENDIX: MANUSCRIPT VARIANTS

Three significant manuscript variants deserve mention. Instead of listing all minor variants as I have in most other chapters, I will discuss these three in more detail.

(The minor variants make no difference to the overall interpretation here and are available in Malter's critical edition of the Tractate, pp. 98–99.) The sigla are: Oxford, Opp. Add. Fol. 23 (366) = O; London BM Harley 5508 (400) = L; Munich 95 = M; Munich 140 = M^2; Vatican 134 = V^{17}.

(1) We find two main textual traditions of the exegetical frame (A, A'). In our base text, ms O, Honi wonders, "[How could they be] in a dream for seventy years?" (אמ' שבעין שני בחלמא); this is followed by his insight, "Certainly seventy years [passed] in a dream!" (אמ' ודאי שבעין שנין בחילמא). The same basic textual tradition appears in M, which reads, "Is it possible that seventy years were like a dream" and "Certainly seventy years [passed] like a dream." The difference results from O reading "in a dream" (*beheilma*) where M reads "like a dream" (*keheilma*).[39] However, due to the orthographic similarity of the Hebrew letters ב and כ, it is possible that what looks like a ב in O is really a כ as in M or is the product of earlier scribes' misreading the כ as a ב.[40]

The other textual tradition is found in M^2: "Is there anyone who sleeps seventy years" (אמ' מי איכא דניים שבעי שנה) and "Certainly I slept seventy years" (אמ' ודאי ניימא שבעין שני; and Pesaro is very similar), with no mention of a dream. A conflation of the two traditions appears in L and V^{17} as well as some later attestations: "Is there anyone who sleeps seventy years like a dream" and "Certainly I slept seventy years like a dream" (so V^{17}; the others are similar)[41] Fraenkel claims that M^2's version is correct, the other a corruption, on the grounds that R. Yohanan's introductory statement (A) does not belong to the "original" story but was transferred from the PT (see above, "Tradition History"). If upon waking Honi mentions a dream (A'), he can only be referring to the verse and the exegetical difficulty (A). On the other hand, if Honi simply says, "then I slept seventy years," as in M^2, he could be referring to his own statement to the farmer at B1 (which mentions seventy years) and not to the verse. It is questionable methodology, however, to choose the correct text on the basis of such literary considerations. If the opening dictum is not eliminated, then the textual variants do not make much of a difference. In both cases, Honi at A' acknowledges that his experience resolves the exegetical difficulty he states in A. Whether that difficulty is "how can one sleep for seventy years?" "how can one be in a dream for seventy years?" or "is it possible that seventy years pass like a dream?" the reference is to the scriptural verse.

(2) Only M and L mention that Honi saw that his she-ass had given birth to many herds. Malter suggests that this line was added from an unknown source, as it has little to do with the story. Fraenkel makes a creative, though strained, effort to relate it more substantively to his interpretation.[42]

(3) The final proverb appears in several variant forms, though these mainly involve variations in pronunciation, not content. The Vilna printing and a few other witnesses[43] read או חברותא או מיתותא (*o hevruta o mituta*), which makes a pleasant

rhyme. But most earlier printings and manuscripts read או חברא או מיתותא (*o havra o mituta*) or או חברא או מותא (*o havra o mota*), the latter version also showing the balance typical of proverbs. The change attested in the Vilna printing may be a belated effort to further contextualize the proverb, as the term *hevruta* in later Hebrew came to refer to an academic fellowship or study-partner.

Chapter 5

R. Tsadoq's Firstling: Genesis of a Talmudic Story (Berakhot 27b–28a, Bekhorot 36a)

The story of R. Tsadoq's firstling (*bekhor*) found at Bekhorot 36a has been underutilized in illustrating the compositional techniques of the Bavli redactors, despite the attention called to it over thirty years ago by Robert Goldenberg.[1] It is well-worth revisiting in the context of the present study. The story is closely parallel to the beginning of the long narrative of Rabban Gamaliel's deposition, a text that has received much more scholarly attention (bBer 27b–28a). The crucial questions are what is the nature of the relationship between the two passages, and how did this relationship come to be? I have set the texts in parallel columns with the shared phrases in bold type.

Berakhot 27b–28a (ms Florence II I 7–9)	Bekhorot 36a (ms Florence II I 7–9)
[a] (1) Our sages have taught. Once a certain student	R. Tsadoq had this firstborn [animal]. He threw down barley for it [to eat] in woven baskets of peeled willow. While it was eating its lip was split.
(2) **came before R. Yehoshua.**	**[He] came before R. Yehoshua**

(3) **He said to him**, "The evening prayer: optional or obligatory?"

He said to him, "Did we draw a distinction between a [priest] who is a *haver* (= fellow sage) and a [priest] who is an *am ha'arets* (non-rabbi)?"

(4) **R. Yehoshua said to him**, "Optional."

R. Yehoshua said to him, "Yes."

(5) **He came before Rabban Gamaliel. He said to him,**

He came before Rabban Gamaliel. He said to him,

(6) "[The evening prayer]: optional or obligatory?"

"Did we draw a distinction between a [priest] who is a *haver* and a [priest] who is an *am ha'arets*?"

(7) **Rabban Gamaliel said to him**, "Obligatory."

Rabban Gamaliel said to him, "No."

(8) **He said to him, "But did not R. Yehoshua say to me**, 'Optional.'"

He said to him, "But did not R. Yehoshua say to me, 'Yes.'"

(9) **He said to him, "Wait until the shield-bearers [the sages] enter the academy (*beit hamidrash*)."**

He said to him, "Wait until the shield-bearers [= the sages] enter the academy (*beit hamidrash*)."

[b](10) **When** the shield-bearers **entered the academy, the questioner stood up and asked,**

[b] **When** they **entered the academy, the questioner stood up and asked**,

(11) "The evening prayer: optional or obligatory?"

"Did we draw a distinction between a [priest] who is a *haver* and a [priest] who is an *am ha'arets*?"

(12) Rabban Gamaliel said to him, "Obligatory."

(13) Rabban Gamaliel said to the sages, "Is there anyone who disagrees on this matter?"

(14) **R. Yehoshua said to him, "No."**

(15) He [Rabban Gamaliel] **said to him, "But did not they say to me in your name,** 'Optional?'"

(16) He said to him, **"Yehoshua! Stand on your feet that they may bear witness against you."**

[c](17) **R. Yehoshua stood on his feet and said, "If I were living and he [the student] dead, the living could contradict the dead. Now that I am living and he is living, how can the living contradict the living?"**

(18) **Rabban Gamaliel was sitting and expounding while R. Yehoshua stood on his feet, until all the people murmured and said to Hutspit the turgeman "Stop!," and he stopped.**

(19) They said, "How long will he [Rabban Gamaliel] go on distressing him [R. Yehoshua]?

[d1] (20) (i) Last year on Rosh HaShana, he distressed him,
(ii) he came with the firstlings (*ata bivekhorot*),[2] in the incident involving R. Tsadoq, (and) distressed him.
(iii) Now he distresses him again."

R. Yehoshua said to him, "No."

Rabban Gamaliel **said to him, "But did not they say to me in your name,** 'Yes'?"

"Yehoshua! Stand on your feet that they may bear witness against you."

[c] **R. Yehoshua stood on his feet and said, "If I were living and he dead, the living could contradict the dead. Now that I am living and he is living, how can the living contradict the living?"**

[d] **Rabban Gamaliel was sitting and expounding while R. Yehoshua stood on his feet, until all the people murmured and said to Hutspit the turgeman "Stop!," and he stopped.**

The issue in bBekh 36a concerns blemishes of firstlings that render them permissible for priests to consume. According to mBekh 5:4, lay shepherds

may be trusted to declare that unnatural blemishes came about accidentally, but priestly shepherds cannot be trusted, as they are suspected of causing the blemishes intentionally because they stand to benefit. R. Tsadoq asks whether the sages distinguish between a priest who is a *haver*, a member of the Pharisaic-rabbinic "fellowship," who would not be suspected of breaking the law and causing a blemish, and a priest who is an *am ha'arets*, a non-rabbi, who might well have caused the blemish. The issue in bBer 27b–28a is whether the statutory evening prayer is optional or obligatory.

There are a number of minor differences between the common portions of the two stories, but these are no more numerous or significant than the variants among the manuscripts of each story. The two stories have an almost identical structure and share a great deal of dialogue. The concluding sections (16–18) follow each other almost verbatim, as do some earlier passages (5, 9, 10, 14). The other sections have been altered only insofar as to change the subject of the debate from prayer to the firstling and change the rulings of Rabban Gamaliel and R. Yehoshua from "optional"/"obligatory" to "yes"/"no" ("yes" = we distinguish between types of priests; "no" = we do not distinguish) (3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 11, 15).[3] Obviously we are not dealing with two actual events that transpired in these two remarkably similar ways. Nor are we hearing two independent storytellers who each coincidentally told his story in such similar fashion. We confront a literary process whereby one story has been generated and manufactured on the basis of the other.[4]

The questions then become: which narrative is original and which adapted, and when did the adaptation occur? At first glance the Bekhorot story appears to be the earlier, as the Berakhot story refers to it directly with the sages' remark that Rabban Gamaliel distressed R. Yehoshua in "the incident involving R. Tsadoq" (20[ii]). Nevertheless, it seems almost certain that in fact Berakhot is original, for three main reasons. First, Berakhot has an extensive parallel in the PT, in a similar location in Tractate Berakhot, with a similar plot and dialogue (yBer 4:1, 7c–d [35–36]). This briefer version of the story is probably the Bavli's source. The argument in the PT is about prayer, and Gamaliel and Yehoshua debate over optional/obligatory, as in bBer 27b. The story probably went from yBerakhot to bBerakhot and subsequently from there to bBekhorot. (And even if both the PT and BT have a common source here, rather than the BT revising the PT, that source had to do with prayer, not the firstling.) The reverse route—that the passage traveled from bBekhorot to yBerakhot and was adapted by the PT storytellers from a controversy over the firstling to prayer—is virtually impossible

according to everything we know both about the direction such stories have traveled and the techniques of PT storytellers.

Second, the Berakhot story continues and ultimately resolves the controversy between Gamaliel and Yehoshua (see below), whereas the Bekhorot story abruptly stops almost *in medias res*. What happened after the "people" told the *turgeman* to stop? This Bekhorot story is a fragment, not a complete story, a derivative of a complete story, namely that of bBerakhot.

Third, section 10 contains a telling indication of the original in the phrase "*the questioner* (*hasho'el*) stood up and asked." This formulation makes perfect sense in Berakhot, as the "questioner" is the unidentified student mentioned in section 1.[5] But in Bekhorot, R. Tsadoq—not an unidentified person—asks the question in section 1, speaks with Rabban Gamaliel in sections 2–9, and is instructed to ask the question again during the academic session (9). Section 10 in Bekhorot should have read, "When they entered the academy, *R. Tsadoq* stood up and said." The only reason it reads "questioner" is because the storytellers have transferred this section from Berakhot verbatim.

These considerations suggest that the story in Berakhot is original and the Bekhorot story of R. Tsadoq was modeled on it. How then do we explain the fact that Berakhot refers to Bekhorot (20)? Goldenberg proposes the following tradition-history:

> A number of traditions recounting disputes between Gamaliel and Joshua were in circulation; another has survived in M. R.H. 2:8–9. One of these, concerning R. Sadoq's firstling, eventually became an echo of the story about the evening prayer. This may have occurred because the story about the evening prayer culminated in Gamaliel's removal and thus became better known. In the end the story about the firstling was forgotten, and there remained only a tradition that something concerning a firstling had happened. The present narrative was supplied.[6]

In other words, some rudimentary form of the Bekhorot story—an account of a conflict between Gamaliel and Yehoshua over a firstling—circulated at the same time as the Berakhot story and other similar traditions. As the story about their controversy over prayer (Berakhot) became more and more famous, the tradition about the conflict over the firstling was lost except for a vague memory that some such conflict had occurred. Having no tradition about the nature of that controversy, someone generated the Bekhorot story as a kind of filler material on the basis of the Berakhot story. Thus, the stories of conflicts over prayer and a firstling were contemporaneous (this explains why Berakhot can refer to Bekhorot). Yet the current form

of the Bekhorot story is later than that of the Berakhot story and modeled upon it (this accounts for those considerations above that suggest that the Berakhot story is original).

Some such sequence of events is theoretically possible, though it seems unlikely that a story should be forgotten to such an extent, especially if another story referred to it. And even if the details of the Bekhorot tradition were forgotten, why should a story be adapted from Berakhot to fill the lacuna? But more significant is Goldenberg's realization that we must be dealing with a literary process involving the borrowing of tradition, despite the fact that he wrote before the theory of the Stammaim. And he recognized that Bekhorot—in its current form—is modeled on Berakhot.

In fact, the Berakhot reference to Bekhorot can be explained easily. This story of Rabban Gamaliel's deposition contains numerous late elements, which I will discuss below, and seems to have been composed or at least reworked well into the Stammaitic period. Cross-references to other stories, in particular, are characteristic of Stammaitic narratives.[7] So we need not consider the Berakhot story to have been composed all at one time, but rather in stages. The section that refers to the controversies over the firstling and the new year was probably a later addition. I would therefore suggest that the Berakhot story was original, the Bekhorot story was generated on the basis of the Berakhot story, and at a later point the reference to the Bekhorot story was inserted into the Berakhot story as it continued to be developed. In some halakhic *sugyot* we can distinguish two or more Stammaitic layers, as later redactors continued to rework the compositions of their predecessors.[8] Here we have a case of a similar phenomenon in the production of stories: earlier redactors composed the Bekhorot story and still later redactors inserted the cross-reference into Berakhot as they continued to rework that story.

At all events—whichever story is deemed original—the comparison of the parallel sections illustrates clearly one of the processes by which the redactors created new stories. They borrowed and adapted one story to generate another, reproducing the components of the plot and dialogue where possible, and altering these elements where necessary. The derivative story was "patterned," so to speak, on an original story, resembling it to an astonishing degree. This process is very similar to that which characterizes the production of some halakhic *sugyot*, where one part of a *sugya* or of a series of argumentation is transferred and adapted to a new context. In fact, the abrupt ending and fragmentary character of the story of R. Tsadoq almost looks like a storytellers' exercise or experiment in recycling material

in order to create new anecdotes.[9] In most cases, to be sure, the storytellers were more creative and imaginative, spinning new and innovative stories out of older material. In Bekhorot, however, we witness this process; and, although it has been for some reason arrested before flowering into its typical richness, it is still representative of Stammaitic narrative technique. Examples such as this, though rare, provide indisputable evidence of Stammaitic composition of stories, and they deserve a great deal more scholarly analysis.

Late Elements in the "Deposition of Rabban Gamaliel"

The story of Rabban Gamaliel's deposition has been the subject of many studies, including a superb literary analysis by Devora Steinmetz.[10] What has not been noticed sufficiently is the late elements of this story that mark it as a Stammaitic narrative.[11] Here I wish briefly to discuss these elements to substantiate the claim of the post-Amoraic dating of BT stories. The rest of the story is as follows, cited for convenience according to the first complete printed edition (Venice, 1520), with several manuscript variants, which are discussed below. The labeling of sections with lowercase letters continues from the first part of the story printed above.

[d2] "Come, let us depose him. Whom will we raise up [in his place]?

(1) Shall we raise up R. Yehoshua? He is involved in the matter?

(2) Shall we raise up R. Akiba? Perhaps he [Rabban Gamaliel] will harm him, since he has no ancestral merit.

(3) Rather let us raise up R. Eleazar b. Azariah, for he is wise, and he is wealthy, and he is tenth [in descent] from Ezra.

(1) He is wise—so that if anyone asks a difficult question, he will be able to solve it.

(2) He is wealthy—so that if it is necessary to pay honor to the Emperor, he too will go and pay honor.

(3) And he is tenth in descent from Ezra—he has ancestral merit and he [Rabban Gamaliel] will not be able to harm him."

[e] They said to him, "Would our Master consent to be the head of the academy?" He said to them, "Let me go and consult with the members of my household." He went and consulted his wife.

(1) She said to him, "Perhaps they will depose you?" He said to her, "*One raises the level of holiness but does not diminish it (mMen 11:7)*."[12]

(2) [She said to him,] "Perhaps he [Rabban Gamaliel] will harm you?" He said, "[Let a man use] a valuable cup for one day even if it breaks on the morrow."

(3) [She said to him,] "You have no white hair." That day he was eighteen years old. A miracle happened for him and he was crowned with eighteen rows of white hair. (This explains what R. Eleazar b. Azariah said [elsewhere], *One recites the [paragraph about] the redemption from Egypt at night. R. Eleazar b. Azariah said: Behold I am as seventy years old . . . (mBer 1:5)*, and not "[I am] seventy years old.")

[f] It was taught: That day they removed the guard of the gate and gave students permission to enter. For Rabban Gamaliel had decreed, "Any student whose inside is not like his outside may not enter the academy."

[g] That day many benches were added. R. Yohanan said, "Abba Yosef b. Dostenai and the sages disagree. One said, 'Four hundred benches were added.' And one said, 'Seven hundred benches.'"

[h] Rabban Gamaliel became distressed. He said, "Perhaps, God forbid, I held back Torah from Israel." They showed him in a dream white casks filled with ashes.[13] But that was not so, they showed him [the dream] only to put his mind at peace [but he really had held back Torah.]

[i] It was taught, "They taught [Tractate] Eduyyot on that day." (And anywhere it says, *On that day* [in the Mishna]—[refers to] that day.) And there was not a single law pending in the academy that they did not resolve.

[j] And even Rabban Gamaliel did not hold himself back from the academy (*beit hamidrash*). For it was taught:

On that day Yehuda the Ammonite proselyte stood before them in the academy. He said to them, "Am I [permitted] to enter the congregation of Israel [= to convert]." Rabban Gamaliel said to him, "You are forbidden." R. Yehoshua said

to him, "You are permitted." Rabban Gamaliel said, "Is it not written, *No Ammonite or Moabite shall be admitted into the congregation of the Lord (Deut 23:4)*." R. Yehoshua said to him, "And are Ammon and Moab in their [original] places? Sennacherib King of Assyria has since come up and mixed up all the nations, as it says, *I have erased the borders of peoples; I have plundered their treasures and exiled their vast populations (Isa 10:13)*. And whatever separates, separates from the majority." Rabban Gamaliel said to him, "Has it not already been said, *I will restore the fortunes of the Ammonites—declares the Lord (Jer 49:6)*, and they have already been restored." R. Yehoshua said to him, "*Has it not already been said, I will restore my people Israel (Amos 9:14)*, and they have not yet been restored." Immediately they permitted him to enter the congregation (= mYad 4:4).

[k] Rabban Gamaliel said [to himself], "Since it is so, I will go and appease R. Yehoshua." When he arrived at his house, he saw that the walls of his house were black. He said to him, "From the walls of your house it is evident that you are a smith." He said to him, "Woe to the generation whose chief you are, for you do not know the distress of the scholars, how they earn a living and how they subsist." He said to him, "I apologize to you. Forgive me." He [R. Yehoshua] paid no attention to him. [Rabban Gamaliel said,] "Do it for the honor of my father's house." He said to him, "You are forgiven."

[l] They said, "Who will go and tell the rabbis [that we have reconciled]." A certain laundryman said, "I will go." R. Yehoshua sent [word] to the academy, "Let he who wears the robe wear the robe. Should one who does not wear the robe say to one who wears the robe, 'Take off your robe and I will wear it?'" R. Akiba said, "Lock the doors so that the servants of Rabban Gamaliel cannot come in and distress the sages."

[m] R. Yehoshua said [to himself], "It is best that I arise and go to them." He went and knocked on the door. He said, "Let a sprinkler, the son of a sprinkler, sprinkle. Should he who is neither a sprinkler nor the son of a sprinkler say to a sprinkler, the son of a sprinkler, your water is cave-water and your ashes are common ashes?" R. Akiba said to R. Yehoshua, "Have you been appeased? We acted only for the sake of your honor. Tomorrow you and I will rise early to his [Gamaliel's] door."

[n] They said, "What shall we do?

(1) Shall we depose him [R. Eleazar b. Azariah]? There is a tradition, *One raises the level of holiness but not does not diminish it (mMen 7:11)*.

(2) Shall this master expound on one Sabbath and that master on the next? He [Rabban Gamaliel] will be jealous of him.

(3) Rather, let Rabban Gamaliel expound three Sabbaths and R. Eleazar b. Azariah one Sabbath."

(This explains the tradition, "*Whose Sabbath was it? It was [the Sabbath] of R. Eleazar b. Azariah [tSot 7:9]*)."

[o] And that student [who asked the original question] was R. Shimon bar Yohai.

1. Cross-references. The cross-references to the stories of R. Tsadoq and Rosh HaShana (section d1, above) can be understood in several ways. Above I translated the references as pertaining to the details of the controversies "on Rosh HaShana" (*berosh hashana*), that is, the controversy that started when Rabban Gamaliel accepted the witnesses who came on Rosh HaShana recounted in mRH 2:8–9 and bRH 25a. "With the firstlings" (*bivekhorot*) means "with regard to the issue of the firstlings."[14] But the references could well be to tractates, as in fact the plural *bekhorot* (firstlings) suggests: "He distressed him last year, in [Tractate] Rosh HaShana; He came in [Tractate] Bekhorot, in the incident involving R. Tsadoq (and) distressed him."[15] Louis Ginzberg, followed by Goldenberg, suggests that the references to the tractates were marginal glosses that entered the text.[16] Hence the translation should be: "He distressed him last year (in Tractate Rosh HaShana); He came (in Tractate Bekhorot) and distressed him in the incident involving R. Tsadoq." However, since the tractate names appear in all manuscripts and text witnesses, they are unlikely to be medieval scribal glosses.[17] They may have originated in the late Stammaitic or even Geonic period, when the text was largely fixed and yet additions continued to accrete—that murky period when the line between fixed text and gloss is unclear.[18] If so, then we are dealing with a later period when there are talmudic tractates with *sugyot* in some form, and not simply circulating oral traditions. Mentions of tractates are often found in the "Saboraic" *sugyot* identified by Avraham Weiss that cluster at the beginning of tractates and sometimes chapters.[19] There are also variants to these lines in the mss, though the other readings do not make the meaning any clearer.[20]

There is also a cross-reference in section n3 to the story involving R. Eleazar b. Azariah's homily, analyzed in the next chapter.[21]

2. Dialectics as the measure of expertise and the academic setting.[22]

yBer 4:1, 7c	bBer 27b
They went and appointed R. Eleazar b. Azariah to the assembly (*yeshiva*).	Let us appoint R. Eleazar b. Azariah, for he is wise, and he is rich, and he is tenth in descent from Ezra.
R. Akiba sat and felt distressed. He said, "It is not that he is more learned in Torah than I, but that he is more the descendant of great men than I."	He is wise—*so that if they object to him, he will solve it*. He is rich—so that if he must pay honor at the court of the Emperor [he will be able to do so].
What was R. Eleazar b. Azariah's peg? He was tenth generation [in descent] from Ezra.	He is tenth in descent from Ezra and has ancestral merit—so that they cannot punish him.
	They went and said to him, "Will you consent to be the head of the academy?"

In the Yerushalmi R. Eleazar b. Azariah is appointed solely on the basis of his lineage. In the Bavli it is a combination of lineage, wealth, and wisdom, that is, knowledge of Torah, which is then defined in terms of his dialectical abilities, as is characteristic of Stammaitic narratives. In the PT they wish to appoint R. Eleazar to the assembly (*yeshiva*); in the BT they wish to appoint him to be "head of the academy."[23] The title "head of the academy" points to Stammaitic times, after the rise of large-scale academies of rabbinic study.[24]

3. The guard and doors (sections f and l). The motif of a guard at the door of the study-house/academy appears in but one other rabbinic source, the story of Hillel, who could not afford to pay the entry fee and almost froze to death, found in the Bavli (bYom 35b). Likewise, exclusion or expulsion from the study-house/academy appears only in BT sources.[25] This motif and the "locking of the doors" motif may also point to permanent, institutionalized academies, which in turn would indicate the Stammaitic period.

4. The "servants/slaves (*avdei*) of Rabban Gamaliel" (l). This is a puzzling reference. Who are these slaves? Catherine Hezser has noted that the Bavli contains a number of traditions about the slaves of the rabbis and tensions between them and community members. Aristocratic rabbis such as the head of the academy presumably possessed slaves. Hezser also observes that a number of traditions report that slaves of the exilarch "distressed" various rabbis, the same verb R. Akiba uses here (bGit 67b, bQid 70b).[26] Now, the Bavli routinely uses the term "Nasi" to refer to the exilarch, and in Geonic times the exilarch became an increasing presence within the rabbinic academy.[27] It is possible that these servants or slaves of Rabban Gamaliel that R. Akiba wishes to keep out of the academy represent the slaves of the exilarch of post-Amoraic times or slaves of the head of the academy who had adopted the aristocratic ways of the exilarch.

5. Quotation of other rabbinic sources. Rabban Gamaliel's saying "Any student whose inside is not like his outside may not enter the academy" (f) is attributed to Rava in bYom 72b. This saying does not appear in the PT version of the story; it is part of the BT's reworking. The redactors borrowed the statement from Rava and incorporated it into the story, a sign of late composition. The attribution of the saying to Rabban Gamaliel, moreover, creates a type of pseudo-*baraita*, as this section is introduced by the technical term *tanna*, "it was taught," typically used to introduce *baraitot*.[28] The story also cites mYad 4:4 in its entirety (j). While all Amoraim would have known the Mishna, the extensive citation and use of the Mishna not for halakhic purposes but as a subnarrative within the longer narrative looks more like a Stammaitic than an Amoraic mobilization of sources.

The story also quotes mMen 11:7 twice, once in the mouth of R. Eleazar b. Azariah's wife (e1, n1)! In addition, mBer 1:5 is briefly adduced to substantiate the miracle of R. Eleazar b. Azariah's whitening hair (e3). Near the conclusion (n3) the narrative cites the "Whose Sabbath was it?" tradition from either tSot 7:9 or bHag 3a (see Chapter 6). We have, then, an impressive use of other sources as building blocks of the composition, which is akin to the use of other sources in BT halakhic *sugyot*. Not one of these sources appears in the PT parallel.[29]

6. Mishnaic gloss. There appears a brief Aramaic gloss within the citation of the mYad 4:4 (j): "And whatever separates, separates from the majority" (*kol depareish miruba pareish*). This abstract systemic principle appears six other times in the BT, all in the Stammaitic stratum.[30] The

storytellers thus included within their quotation of the Mishna the abstract principle by which the Stammaim explained the source. Once again we note the interweaving of halakhic principles into an aggadic narrative and the fluid boundaries between these modes.

7. "But it was not so" (h). This phrase has long been known to signal later additions.[31] The PT parallel lacks this section. Moreover, its presence within the flow of the BT story is problematic, in that it disputes the assertion of the preceding section. The casks full of ashes[32] in the dream indicate that Rabban Gamaliel *did not* restrict worthy students from entering the academy: like the casks that contained nothing of value, the students possessed no true merit. The "but it was not so" then rejects or at least explains away the dream as a gesture to Rabban Gamaliel. He *did* restrict worthy students from entering the academy, but the "master of dreams" (or angels, or whoever is responsible for dreams) wished Gamaliel to believe that he had not kept out the worthy students, so as not to cause him anxiety. I think that we witness here an internal debate among Stammaim, or between earlier and later Stammaim, over access to the academy. Some believe he appropriately restricted access ("they showed him in his dreams"), while others felt he should not have kept out scholars ("but it was not so") In any case, the "but it was not so" indicates the continued development of the story well into the Stammaitic period.

8. Wandering order. There are three cases of sections found in different order in the mss.[33] In ms Munich, section i appears between sections e and f of the other mss and printings. The final note concerning the identity of the student (o) appears at the beginning of the story (section a) in ms Oxford ("Once a certain student came before R. Yehoshua. And who was it [*umanu*]? R. Shimon b. Yohai.") The Paris and Florence manuscripts contain an addition between k and l: "What did Rabban Gamaliel expound and what did R. Eleazar b. Azariah expound? Rabban Gamaliel expounded, 'Any student whose inside is not like his outside may not enter the academy.' R. Eleazar b. Azariah expounded, 'Let a man always engage in Torah and the commandments, since from [doing them] not for their own sake, he will come [to do them] for their own sake.'" This addition repeats the "decree" attributed to Rabban Gamaliel of section f. Ms Oxford adds this exposition attributed to R. Eleazar b. Azariah immediately after section f, thus avoiding the repetition. The exhortation appears several times in the BT, attributed to Rav, and was probably borrowed from one of those

passages.[34] The wandering of a passage in halakhic and aggadic *sugyot* may indicate that the passage originated as a gloss that was incorporated into the text in different locations.[35]

9. Tensions with wives. R. Eleazar b. Azariah's wife offers three arguments why he should not accept the appointment as head of the academy (e).[36] Tension between obligations to the wife and the desire to study Torah or spend years away from home at the academy characterize a number of late BT stories.[37] Here, too, the wife opposes advancement of the husband's academic career.

Each of these considerations, taken in and of itself, can be explained away. One could argue, for example, that the Mishnaic gloss (6) was added by the Stammaim to an otherwise Amoraic source and tells us nothing about the rest of the story, or that the locking of the doors is a function of the narrative dynamic here and unrelated to the motif found elsewhere. Yet, when taken together, the sum of the evidence points to continued reworking of the entire story by the Stammaim and nicely exemplifies many of their methods.

Chapter 6

A Warning to Disciples: Manners and Mutilation (Hagigah 3a–b)

The aggadic *sugya* found at bHag 3a–b is well known for the famous homily of R. Eleazar b. Azariah and its fascinating views of midrashic hermeneutics and rabbinic theology.[1] This rich text—composed primarily of two stories of discussions between masters and disciples[2]—has drawn attention more recently on several other counts, including the differences between the forms of *baraitot* found in the Bavli compared with the original Tannaitic sources.[3] Yet, true to the homily itself, which compares words of Torah to "fertile and productive" plants, so the fecund Bavli *sugya* continues to yield new points of interest. In contrast to the interests of modern scholars, the primary focus of the *sugya*'s redactors concerns master-disciple relationships. Rabbinic pedagogy depended on such relationships, and numerous legal, homiletical, moral, exegetical, and narrative sources bear on the delicate and complex aspects of proper conduct of both parties. Comparison with parallel versions demonstrates how the redactors illustrated this theme through the juxtaposition and reworking of their sources, and in this way created a cautionary tale to disciples, warning them of the importance of honoring their masters. I will first present the *sugya* with a brief literary analysis and then continue with a comparison of the Bavli to its sources in order to assess the compositional process. The translation is based on ms London BM Harley 5508 with variants noted in the chapter appendix.

(I) (A) Our rabbis taught: Once R. Yohanan b. Beroka and R. Eleazar Hisma went to visit (*lehaqbil pnei*) R. Yehoshua in Peqiin. He [R. Yehoshua] said to

them: "What new teaching (*hiddush*) was there in the house of study today?" They said to him: "Master! We are your disciples and we drink your waters!"

(B1) He said to them, "Nevertheless, it is impossible that there be a house of study without a new teaching of law. Whose Sabbath was it [to preach]?" [They said,] "It was R. Eleazar b. Azariah's Sabbath."

(B2) [He said,] "And where was the lesson?" They said to him, "In the section of *Haqhel* [Deut 31:10–13]."

(B3)(#1) [He said to them,] "And what did he expound?" [They said to him,] "*Gather (*haqhel*) the people—men, women and children (Deut 31:12)*. If the men come to learn, and the women to hear, why do the children come? In order to confer reward on those who bring them."

(C) He said to them, "You had a precious pearl in your hands and tried to deprive me of it!"

(D1)(#2) [They said,]: He [R. Eleazar b. Azariah] also expounded, "*You have affirmed [*he'emarta*] this day that the Lord is your God . . . And the Lord has affirmed [*he'emirkha*] this day that you are his people (Deut 26:17–18)*. The Holy One said to Israel: You made me a unique object of praise (*hativa ahat*) in the world, and I will make you a unique object of praise (*hativa ahat*) in the world. You made me a unique object of praise (*hativa ahat*) in the world, as is written, *Hear O Israel the Lord your God, the Lord alone (Deut 6:4)*, and I too will make you a unique object of praise in the world, as is written, *Who is like Your people Israel, a unique nation on earth (1 Chr 17:21)*."

(D2)(#3) He also opened and expounded, "*The words of the wise are like goads; like nails well-planted [are the words of masters of assemblies; they were given by one shepherd (Qoh 12:11)]*. Why are the words of Torah likened to a goad? To teach you that just as the goad directs the heifer along its furrow to bring forth life to the world, so the words of the Torah direct those who study them from the paths of death to the paths of life. But [you might think that] just as the goad can move [and be removed], so the words of the Torah move [and can be removed]—therefore the text says: *nails* [which once nailed down cannot be removed]. But [if you might think that] just as the nail only diminishes [as it is pounded into wood] and does not increase, so too the words of the Torah only diminish and do not increase—therefore the text says: *well-planted*. Just as a plant grows and increases, so the words of Torah grow and increase.

[What does the phrase] *the masters of assemblies* [mean?] These are the disciples of the wise who sit in assemblies and study the Torah, some pronouncing unclean and others pronouncing clean, some prohibiting and others permitting, some declaring unfit and others declaring fit. Should a man say: Since some pronounce unclean and others pronounce clean, some prohibit and others permit, some declare unfit and others declare fit—how then shall I learn Torah? Therefore Scripture says: *given by one shepherd (Qoh 12:11)*. One God gave them, one leader (i.e., Moses) proclaimed them from the mouth of the Lord of all creation, blessed be He, as it is written, *And God spoke all these words (Exod 20:1)*.

Therefore make your ear like a hopper and acquire a perceptive heart to understand the words of those who pronounce unclean and the words of those who pronounce clean, the words of those who prohibit and the words of those who permit, the words of those who declare unfit and the words of those who declare fit."[4]

(C') He [R. Yehoshua] addressed them in this way: "It is no orphan generation within which R. Eleazar b. Azariah lives."

(Q) And let them tell him directly? [They did not do so] because of an incident that occurred.

(II) (a) As we learned: Once R. Yose b. Dormasqit went to visit (*lehaqbil*) R. Eliezer in Lod. He [R. Eliezer] said to him: "What new teaching (*hiddush*) was there in the house of study today?"

(b) He [R. Yose b. Dormaskit] said to him: "They voted and resolved that Ammon and Moab pay the poorman's tithe in the Sabbatical year."

(c) He said to him, "Yose. Stretch forth your hands and receive (*qabbel*) your eyes." He stretched forth his hands and received his eyes.

(d1) R. Eliezer wept and said, "*The secret of the Lord is with those who fear him; to them He makes known his covenant (Ps 25:14)*." And he said to him, "Yose! Go and say to them, 'Do not pay attention (*tahushu*) to your vote.' Thus I have received [a tradition] from R. Yohanan b. Zakkai, who heard from his master, and his master from his master, that it is a law [received] by Moses on Sinai: [Residents in] Ammon and Moab pay the poorman's tithe in the Sabbatical year.

(d2) "[What is the reason?][5] Those who came up from Egypt [to the Land of Israel] conquered many cities which the [exiles] who came up from Babylonia

did not conquer. Because the first consecration held only for that time but not for the future, they [who returned from Babylonia] left them [Ammon and Moab unconsecrated] in order that the poor could depend on them [for the tithe] during the Sabbatical year."[6]

(c') It was taught: After his [R. Eliezer's] mind was set at ease, he said: "May it be Your will that the eyes of Yose return to their [original] state." And they returned.

Structure and Literary Analysis

The *sugya* is composed of two stories of student(s) reporting to their masters that which transpired in the house of study (I vs. II). In the first case, the students recount three lengthy homilies (#1–#3 in sections B3, D1, D2); in the second case the student reports a vote on a legal issue (B1). The stories have been juxtaposed by means of a brief, unattributed, non-narrative exchange which draws attention to a difference between the two encounters (Q). The question that opens the exchange is in Aramaic, which contrasts with the Hebrew of the two stories. A brief coda to the second account concludes the *sugya* (c'). The *sugya* thus exhibits a two-part structure, with two stories linked together by an unattributed question and response. The keyword or key "root" *qbl* occurs throughout the *sugya* to provide additional coherence. Both anecdotes begin with the disciples journeying to visit (*lehaqbil*) their masters (A, a). The first homily claims that the presence of children "confers reward" (*leqabel sekhar*) to their parents. R. Eliezer commands R. Yose b. Dormasqit to "receive" (*qabbel*) his eye, and then remarks that he has "received" (*mequblani*) a tradition from his teachers.[7]

The hinge of the *sugya* is the contrast between the students' responses to their masters' queries (A2, B2). In the first account, the students of R. Yehoshua initially decline to answer his question about a "new teaching" they heard in the house of study, with the polite, deferential demurral, "We are your students and we drink your water," meaning "you are the exclusive fount of our knowledge, and we do not presume to seek or acquire wisdom elsewhere." The unattributed, non-narrative question "Let them tell him explicitly?" (Q), directs the audience's attention to this odd repartee and explains it by introducing the second account, wherein the student makes no such comment. By contrasting the masters' responses we understand why such a comment was imperative. After his students pay him proper respect, R. Yehoshua repeats his query and then happily listens to their report (B1–C). R. Eliezer, by contrast, insulted that his student R. Yose assumed

he did not know the law or presumed to learn Torah elsewhere, commands him to mutilate himself (c). According to the unattributed answer, "Because of an incident that occurred" (Q), R. Yehoshua's students were aware of R. Eliezer's harsh response to R. Yose and took appropriate precautions. Thus, the Talmudic *sugya* sets the two accounts in temporal and causal order and explains the peculiar gesture of the first account on the basis of the second. Aware that R. Eliezer felt insulted by R. Yose's lack of respect, R. Yohanan b. Beroka and R. Eleazar Hisma honored their master appropriately.

To begin with the first story: the reluctance of R. Yehoshua's students to answer his question is expressed not only by their explicit demurral but by their hesitation to proffer the teaching until repeatedly prodded. R. Yehoshua must ask, first, who preached, second, what biblical text he expounded, and finally, what the exposition was (A–B2). The halting interrogation with the staccato responses invites us to imagine the students' severe discomfort at their master's queries, grudgingly providing the sparest of answers until left with no choice but to repeat the homily.[8] When they finally deliver R. Eleazar b. Azariah's words, R. Yehoshua responds with quite the opposite reaction than anticipated, praising the homily as a "precious pearl" and ruefully observing that the students almost denied him such wisdom. But for his persistence at ferreting out the novel teachings of the house of study, he would not have learned such precious words of Torah. Encouraged and emboldened by their master's enthusiastic response, the students continue with two additional homilies.

The first of R. Eleazar b. Azariah's homilies perhaps exhibits a loose thematic connection to the narrative context in the idea of being present at the place of Torah. Just as there was reason for everyone to be present at Moses's discourse, so there was good reason for the students to be at the house of study. While we often find such thematic connections between the exegetical traditions within Bavli stories and the stories themselves,[9] here I would not press this point. Shlomo Naeh has noted that the context of the three homilies is the biblical passages prescribed by mSot 7:8 for reading at the septennial *haqhel* gathering, which the students report was the subject of the lesson (B2).[10] The second homily indeed exhibits little connection to the narrative situation and is predicated on verses of *haqhel* readings (Deut 26:17–18.) This brief homily explicates the obscure hapax *he'emerta*, though here the explication is almost as unclear as the verse.[11] The third homily also can be considered thematically connected to the narrative in that its vision of the fertile and ever-increasing words of Torah implies the constant production of the "new teachings" that R. Yehoshua solicits. Yet this homily, as Naeh notes, is a *petihta* beginning with the "words (*devarim*) of

sages" of Qoh 12:11 and subsequently interpreting "all these words (*devarim*)" of Deut 1:1, the first verse of the *haqhel* reading, hence also predicated on that context.[12]

The third homily[13] has been much discussed in recent years, so I will suffice with a brief summary. Rabbinic hermeneutics typically understand biblical references to wisdom and sages in terms of Torah and rabbis, hence the "words of the wise" (Qoh 12:11) becomes the Oral Torah of the rabbis. The first part of the homily proceeds through the rich series of similes of the verse, exploring how each pertains to Torah and why the entire series was necessary. Just as a goad directs the cow to plow the field and thereby produce life-giving sustenance for the world, so words of Torah direct students to the correct path of life. Goads, however, are movable or transient, which suggests that the goad-like words of Torah too are transient or ephemeral, clearly an undesirable implication. That is why the verse also compares Torah to nails, which are firm and lasting. Nails, however, diminish, as they wear away or as they are hammered deeply into wood. Hence the verse continues to describe words of Torah as "well-planted," since plants are fertile and increase. Thus, words of Torah are, as Menahem Fisch puts it, "at once partly spur-like, partly nail-like, and partly plant-like, but wholly resemble none of them."[14]

The homily continues with the next words of the verse, "masters of assemblies," interpreting the phrase in terms of the assemblies of sages who disagree on numerous points of law. This situation causes the aspiring disciple a practical, exegetical, and ideological crisis of confidence: "how then can I learn Torah" when it is riddled with contradictory opinions? How did this seemingly disastrous condition of numerous disputes arise? And, from a practical perspective, how will the student know which legal opinion to follow? The next part of the verse provides the answer: in a paradoxical way, all the opposing opinions "were given by one shepherd"—they all emanated from God such that neither side is wrong. The student should therefore not despair of learning, but rather—returning to the agricultural metaphors—make his "ear like a hopper" and collect all the disputes in his own heart (= mind). Given this fertile, pluralistic and multivalent Torah, the challenge for the student is to master the conflicting positions and to *understand* the foundations of all of them, rather than to adjudicate between them in a quest for the absolute Truth. The homily constitutes "an argument for open-ended dialogue and the need to study midrash in *all* of its multiple and contested cases."[15] We have here a version of the maximalist view of revelation, whereby the Oral Torah revealed at Sinai includes all future opinions and novel interpretations articulated by the sages.

This story concludes with R. Yehoshua again expressing praise for R. Eleazar b. Azariah (C'). He reaffirms his delight in hearing reports of Torah that his students learned elsewhere and supports his contention that the house of study will always have a "new teaching." With such teachers as R. Eleazar b. Azariah, contemporary sages are not "orphans," bereft of guidance and instruction, but in the capable hands of creative pedagogues.

The second story begins in parallel form to the first (IA vs. IIa). A disciple visits his master at a certain location, and the master inquires with the same words, "What new teaching was there in the study house today?" At this point the accounts diverge in every respect. The student answers directly, rather than protesting that he learns exclusively from his master (b). He reports of a vote on a rather prosaic halakhic issue,[16] not a rich, aggadic homily. The master responds with anger and weeping, not enthusiasm and praise, commanding his disciple to blind himself (c). Instead of observing that he was almost deprived of learning something new, the master observes that he already knew the issue, and dismisses the utility of the discussion in the house of study (d1). R. Eliezer knew the law from a chain of oral tradition, and he[17] even supplies the legal reasoning that underpins the law (d2). Of course under these circumstances the student does not continue with additional reports of homilies from the house of study, as in the first account. In place of the concluding comment praising R. Eleazar b. Azariah, the story concludes with a coda informing us that at least R. Eliezer felt remorse for blinding his student and caused him to be healed (c').

The models of both authority and Torah in this account differ substantially from those in the previous anecdote. Despite R. Eliezer's query—what new teaching was there?—his speech portrays a closed tradition, not a fertile corpus that constantly expands.[18] He emphasizes the tradition that was "received" and "heard" faithfully by students from their masters all the way back to Moses. But, unlike the Moses (= leader/shepherd) of R. Eleazar b. Azariah's homily, who is the source of the multiple contradictory and novel interpretations, R. Eliezer's Moses is the origin of a single, stable and unitary tradition.[19] R. Eliezer accordingly takes offense at the audacity of the students of the study house to determine the law based on argumentation and dialogue, and he tearfully bids R. Yose to tell them that they need pay no attention to their vote, as it was irrelevant.[20] Similarly, R. Yose needs no source of law other than his master, who promptly supplies the legal rationale for the ruling.

In light of R. Eliezer's ultimate approval of the decision of the other rabbis, there have been attempts to interpret the command to remove the eyes symbolically. Steinmetz suggests that it might be understood as an ac-

cusation that R. Yose is blind to tradition and to the teachings R. Eliezer has received. Kahana has noted that "eyes" symbolize the sages or elders in some rabbinic sources: "*your eyes (Song 7:5)* — these are the elders appointed over the community."[21] I would add that eyes and sight contrast with the hearing of tradition that R. Eliezer emphasizes — "heard from his master, and his master from his master" (d1). The gesture may then be seen as a rejection of the vote of the "eyes" (= sages of the study house) in deference to tradition heard from one's master. Nevertheless, given the violence that characterizes BT sage-stories,[22] as well as the apparent necessity to replace the eye in the final line, I think the literal meaning cannot be denied, though additional symbolism may well be present, too.[23]

We have, then, two anecdotes representing two contrasting views of authority, the nature of Torah, and rabbinic interpretation — and it is these fascinating topics that have attracted the attention of modern scholars. However, because of the anonymous interchange (Q, "And let him tell him directly? [They did not do so] because of an incident that occurred"), it is the contrast in master-disciple relationships, and specifically the theme of shame and honor, that emerge as the key interests of the *sugya* in its current form. Now, this interchange is clearly the work of the Bavli redactors. Not only is it unattributed and dialectical, the classic form of the Stammaitic stratum, but it begins in Aramaic, in contrast to the Hebrew of the stories. By juxtaposing the two accounts in this way, the Stammaim have focused the audience's attention on this particular difference as the crux of the *sugya* that conveys its primary message.[24] Students who affront their masters' honor, even in what seems to be the most innocuous and innocent way, risk receiving terrible punishment. By reporting a law that he heard in the house of study, R. Yose implied either that his master did not know the law or that he was prepared to acquire knowledge elsewhere. Though he certainly intended no harm, R. Yose's report caused R. Eliezer to feel ashamed and prompted the violent response. The students of R. Yehoshua, on the other hand, took care to honor their master, refusing to relate in his presence any other teaching until he insisted. We have a vivid depiction of the dangers of insulting or shaming one's master, and the importance of taking every possible precaution to honor a teacher.

Without the anonymous interchange — if the two stories are considered independently or even juxtaposed without any mediating passage — it is doubtful whether the audience would arrive at any such interpretation. They might have acknowledged the etiquette of disciples as a minor motif, but they hardly would have identified it as the major theme. Certainly the

different responses of students and reactions of masters would attract attention, but the differences could just as easily be chalked up to the different character of the masters, or to the different matters reported from the house of study—aggadic expositions in the first story as opposed to a halakhic ruling in the second—, or to some other factor. R. Eliezer's particularly strong reaction could be attributed to his irascible personality or his annoyance that the sages took a vote on an issue of received tradition, for which he unfairly punishes R. Yose, blaming the messenger for the message. There would seem to be no temporal or causal relationship between the stories such that we would interpret the deference shown in the first story *as a result* of its lack in the second, and as an indispensable element of a disciple's deportment. It is only because the Stammaim construed R. Yehoshua's students' deferential response as a reaction to R. Yose b. Dormasqit's unfortunate fate that shame and honor emerge as the reason for the difference and hence the critical lesson. Presently we will see, in addition, that the second story has been reworked to emphasize the issue of proper deference, but the important point is the subtle—just six words—yet powerful way that the Stammaim focus the audience's attention on their greatest concern: master-disciple relationships, honor, and the dangers of insulting or shaming a master.

The shame and honor in this story differs from the more common type discussed in previous chapters. Typically it is the academic setting, the presence of large numbers of rabbis and students, which constitutes the public space that produces an experience of shame and insult. A sage experiences humiliation at being defeated by his colleague in argumentation and appearing to be of inferior ability. Or, like Honi, he is not shown the honor he deserves before the other sages (Chapter 4). Here, however, the setting of both stories is a private domicile and a master is insulted at not receiving appropriate honor from his disciples. Of course, the experience of shame and honor can occur in private, too, so a public setting is not indispensable; and the shaming of a master by his disciple is more likely to take place in private, while that of one colleague or student embarrassing another depends more on the presence of an assembly. More importantly, the Stammaim were constrained in this case by the nature of their sources. The Tannaitic traditions are set in private domains and the storytellers could not—as they sometimes do[25]—change the location to an academic setting. The students bring reports about what took place in the house of study when the masters were absent, so, according to the narrative logic, the setting must be elsewhere. Therefore, the Stammaim here, of necessity, featured a type of shame

and honor attested in other rabbinic compilations, not that associated with dialectics and unique to the Stammaitic stratum. Nevetheless, their deep interests in this ethic can be seen in their efforts to thematize an issue largely absent from their sources.

In their current context, these stories exemplify a type of rabbinic narrative that provides instruction as to proper manners and conduct of disciples. This type includes: (1) Another story of R. Eliezer, this with an anonymous student who dies after issuing a halakhic ruling in his presence (bEruv 63a; yShev 6:1, 36c; *Sifra, Shemini* 1:33); (2) R. Yohanan's student who dies after doubting his master's tradition about the eschaton (bSanh 100a and bBB 75a; *PRK* 18:5 [297–98]).[26] (3) The saga of R. Yohanan and Resh Laqish, where the breakdown of their relationship after a sharp interchange and mutual insults culminates in the death of both (bBM 84a). In the next chapter we discuss stories that address the other side of the relationship, focusing on the master and providing lessons about proper conduct toward his disciples.

Sources

I have suggested that the contrast between the *baraitot* is primarily a function of the way they have been juxtaposed with one difference between them—one among many—highlighted by the Bavli redactors. This conclusion is corroborated and strengthened by comparing the Bavli version of the *baraitot* with the Tannaitic versions themselves, presented in synoptic form below. The first *baraita* of the Bavli is set against the parallel in tSot 7:9 (ms Vienna.) The second *baraita* of the Bavli is presented with its parallels in mYad 4:3 and tYad 2:16.

bHag 3a–3b	tSot 7:9 (ms Vienna)
(I)(A) Once R. Yohanan b. Beroka and R. Eleazar Hisma went to visit (*lehaqbil*) R. Yehoshua in Peqiin.	Once R. Yohanan b. Beroka and R. Eleazar Hisma were coming from Yavneh to Lod and visited (*lehaqbil*) R. Yehoshua in Peqiin.
He [R. Yehoshua] said to them: "What new teaching (*hiddush*) was there in the house of study today?" They said to him: "Master! We are your disciples and we drink your waters!"	R. Yehoshua said to them: "What new teaching (*hiddush*) was there in the house of study today?" They said to him: "We are your disciples and we drink your waters!"

(B1) He said to them, "Nevertheless, it is impossible that there be a house of study without a new teaching of halakha. Whose Sabbath was it [to preach]?" [They said,] "It was R. Eleazar b. Azariah's Sabbath."

He said to them, "It is impossible that there not be a new teaching in the house of study. Whose Sabbath was it [to preach]?" They said to him "It was R. Eleazar b. Azariah's."

(B2) [He said,] "And where was the lesson?" They said to him, "In the section of *Haqhel* [Deut 31:10–13]."

[He said,] "And where was the lesson?" They said to him, *Gather the people—men, women and children (Deut 31:12)*.

(B3)(#1) [He said to them,] "And what did he expound?" [They said to him,] "*Gather the people—men, women and children (Deut 31:12)*. If the men come to learn, and the women to hear, why do the children come? In order to confer reward on those who bring them."

[He said to them,] "And what did he expound?" They said to him, "Master, thus he expounded: '*Gather the people—men, women and children (Deut 31:12)*. If the men come to learn, and the women to hear, why do the children come? In order to confer reward on those who bring them.'"

(C) He said to them, "You had a precious pearl in your hands and tried to deprive me of it!"

(D) (#2) [They said,]: "He [R. Eleazar b. Azariah] also expounded, '*You have affirmed [*he'emarta*] this day that the Lord is your God . . . And the Lord has affirmed [*he'emirkha*] this day that you are his people (Deut 26:17–18)*. The Holy One said to Israel: You made me a unique object of praise (*hativa ahat*) in the world, and I will make you a unique object of praise (*hativa ahat*) in the world. You made me a unique object of praise (*hativa ahat*) in the world,

(ii) [They said,]: "He [R. Eleazar b. Azariah] also expounded, '*You have affirmed [*he'emarta*] this day that the Lord is your God . . . (Deut 26:17)*. The Holy One said to Israel: Just as you have made me a unique object of praise (*hativa ahat*) in this world, I will make you a unique object of praise (*hativa ahat*) in the next world.'"

as is written, *Hear O Israel the Lord your God, the Lord alone (Deut 6:4)*, and I too will make you a unique object of praise in the world, as it is written, *Who is like Your people Israel, a unique nation on earth (1 Chr 17:21)*."

(D) (#3) (i) "He also opened and expounded: *The words of the wise are like goads; like nails well-planted [are the words of masters of assemblies; they were given by one shepherd (Qoh 12:11)]*. Why are the words of Torah likened to a goad? To teach you that just as the goad directs the heifer along its furrow to bring forth life to the world, so the words of the Torah direct those who study them from the paths of death to the paths of life.

(ii) But [you might think that] just as the goad can move [and be removed], so the words of the Torah move [and can be removed]—therefore the text says: *nails* [which once nailed down cannot be removed].

(iii) But [if you might think that] just as the nail only diminishes [as it is pounded into wood] and does not increase, so too the words of the Torah only diminish and do not increase—therefore the text says:

Well-planted. Just as a plant grows and increases, so the words of Torah grow and increase.

(iii) "He also expounded: *The words of the wise are like goads; like nails well-planted [are the words of masters of assemblies; they were given by one shepherd] (Qoh 12:11)*. Just as the goad directs the heifer to bring forth life to the world, so the words of the Torah only bring life to the world, as it says, *She is a tree of life [to those who grasp her] (Prov 3:18)*.

But [you might think that] just as the goad can move [and be removed], so too words of the Torah—therefore the text says *and like nails* [which once nailed down cannot be removed].[27]

Well-planted. Just as a plant grows and increases, so the words of Torah grow and increase.

(iv) [What does the phrase] *masters of assemblies* [mean?] These are the disciples of the wise who sit in assemblies and **study the Torah, some pronouncing unclean and others pronouncing clean, some prohibiting and others permitting, some declaring unfit and others declaring fit.**

[What does the phrase] *masters of assemblies* [mean?] [This refers to] those who enter and **sit assembled in assemblies and declare about the impure that it is impure and about the pure that it is pure. About the impure in its place and about the pure in its place.**

(v) Should a man say: "Since some pronounce unclean and others pronounce clean, some prohibit and others permit, some declare unfit and others declare fit—how then shall I learn Torah?"

Lest one think, "Since the 'House of Shammai declare impure' and the 'House of Hillel declare pure,' 'So-and-so forbids,' and 'So-and-so permits,' how then shall I learn Torah?" **Therefore it says, *Words (Deut 4:12), The words (Deut 4:13), These are the words (Deut 1:1), All these words (20:1).***

(vi) Therefore Scripture says, *Given by one shepherd (Qoh 12:11)*. One God gave them, one leader (i.e., Moses) proclaimed them from the mouth of the Lord of all creation, blessed be He, as it is written, *And God spoke all these words (Exod 20:1)*.

Given by one shepherd (Qoh 12:11). One God created them. One Leader gave them. The Master of Deeds, May he be blessed, spoke them.

(vii) Therefore make **your ear like a hopper and acquire a perceptive heart** to understand the words of those who pronounce unclean and the words of those who pronounce clean, the words of those who prohibit and the words of those who permit, the words of those who declare unfit and the words of those who declare fit."

Therefore **make for yourself a heart of many rooms** [*libkha hadrei hadarim*] and place therein the words of the House of Shammai and the words of the House of Hillel, the words of those who declare impure and the words of those who declare pure."

(C') He [R. Yehoshua] addressed them in this way: "It is no orphan generation within which R. Eleazar b. Azariah lives."

He [R. Yehoshua] said to them: "It is no orphan generation within which R. Eleazar b. Azariah lives."

(Q) And let them tell him directly? [They did not do so] because of an incident which occurred.

bHag 3a–3b

(II)(a) As we learned: Once R. Yose b. Dormasqit went to visit (*lehaqbil*) R. Eliezer in Lod. He [R. Eliezer] said to them: "What new teaching (*hiddush*) was there in the house of study today?"

mYad 4:3[28]

And when R. Yose b. Dormaskit came to R. Eliezer at Lod, he [R. Eliezer] said to them: "What new teaching (*hiddush*) was there in the house of study today?"

tYad 2:16

R. Yose b. Dormaskit said: "I was with the former elders who were going from Yavneh to Lod. I came and found R. Eliezer sitting in the store of the bakers in Lod. He said to me, 'What new teaching (*hiddush*) was there in the house of study today?'

(a2)

"I said to him: 'We are your disciples and we drink your waters!' He said to me, 'Nevertheless, what was the new teaching?'

(b) He [R. Yose] said to him: "They voted and resolved that Ammon and Moab pay the poorman's tithe in the Sabbatical year."

He [R. Yose] said to him: "They voted and resolved that Ammon and Moab pay the poorman's tithe in the Sabbatical year."

"I told him the laws and decisions of the vote, and when I came to this issue [i.e., that residents of Ammon and Moab pay the poorman's tithe in the Sabbatical year, mentioned in tYad 2:15],

(c) He said to him, "Yose. Stretch forth your hands and receive your eyes." He stretched forth his hands and received his eyes.

(d1) R. Eleazar wept and said, "*The secret of the Lord is with those who fear him; to them He makes known his covenant (Ps 25:14)*." And he said to him, "Yose! Go and say to them, 'Do not pay attention (*tahushu*) to your vote.' Thus I have received [a tradition] from R. Yohanan b. Zakkai, who heard from his master, and his master from his master, that it is a law [received] by Moses on Sinai: [Residents in] Ammon and Moab pay the poorman's tithe in the Sabbatical year.

R. Eleazar wept and said, "*The secret of the Lord is with those who fear him (Ps 25:14)*." And he said to him, "Yose! Go and say to them, 'Do not be anxious (*tahushu*) about your vote.' Thus I have received [a tradition] from R. Yohanan b. Zakkai, who heard from his master, and his master from his master as a law [received] by Moses on Sinai: [Residents in] Ammon and Moab pay the poorman's tithe in the Sabbatical year."

his eyes flowed tears. He said, *'The secret of the Lord is with those who fear him, to them He makes known his covenant' (Ps 25:14)*. And it says, *Indeed, my Lord God does nothing without having revealed His purpose to His servants the prophets (Amos 3:7)*. Go and say to them, 'Do not be anxious about (*tahushu*) your vote.' Thus I have received [a tradition] from R. Yohanan b. Zakkai, which he received from the pairs, and the pairs from the prophets, and the prophets from Moses, a law [received] by Moses on Sinai: [Residents in] Ammon and Moab pay the poorman's tithe in the Sabbatical year."

(d2) [What is the reason?] Those who

came up from Egypt [to the Land of Israel] conquered many cities which the [exiles] who came up from Babylonia did not conquer. Because the first consecration held only for that time but not for the future, they [who returned from Babylonia] left them [Ammon and Moab unconsecrated] in order that the poor could depend on them [for the tithe] during the Sabbatical year."

(c') **It was taught. After his [R. Eliezer's] mind was set at ease, he said: "May it be Your will that Yose's eyes return to their [original] state." And they returned.**

(1) One can see immediately that the harsh reaction of R. Eliezer that creates the difference at the heart of the *sugya* is entirely absent from the Tannaitic parallels. Both mYad 4:3 and tYad 2:16 lack sections c and c', the command that the student blind himself and the subsequent remorse.[29] Moreover, the Toseftan account includes the deferential line, "We are your disciples and we drink your waters" (a2), which destroys the entire basis of the Bavli's contrast! This line is wanting in mYad 4:3, which is probably an abbreviated version of tYad 2:16; for, as Shamma Friedman has shown, the Mishna often transmits an abridged form of a longer tradition found in the Tosefta.[30] The Bavli redactors, to be sure, may not have known the

Toseftan version (or may have known it in a different form) and therefore may have noticed the contrast in the students' responses to their masters when comparing tSot 9:7 with mYad 4:3. Even so, it appears that they went to great lengths to capitalize on this subtle contrast, reworking their sources wholecloth by adding sections c and c' and then pointing us to their handiwork with the bridging section (Q).[31] The overt Aramaic redactional comment indicating the interest of the *sugya* thus coheres perfectly with the reworking—in this case the supplements—to the Tannaitic sources. And, without evidence to the contrary, it is more likely that the redactors in fact possessed the Tosefta in its current form and excised the deferential gesture (a2) in order to create the contrast. In either case (whether they knew the *baraita* with or without section a2), this is a particularly clear example of the deliberate reworking of earlier sources, as the redactors almost alert us explicitly to their activities.

Note that in the Tosefta R. Eliezer seems to weep out of joy or relief that the vote accorded with his tradition, not frustration or anger.[32] He quotes Amos 3:7, which casts his contemporaries in a favorable light, identifying them with the prophets, to whom God reveals his secrets, that is, correct rulings.[33] This verse is of necessity omitted in the BT, where his weeping indicates anger. In both the Mishna and Tosefta, R. Eliezer directs his student to inform the others "not to be anxious (*tahushu*)" about their vote, that is, not to worry that they came to the wrong conclusion.[34] The Bavli reworking requires these words to be understood somewhat differently. R. Eliezer's anger renders it unlikely that he means to assuage the anxiety of his colleagues in the house of study.[35] Rather he instructs them not to "pay attention" to their vote, since it was unnecessary. This produces a somewhat strained translation of the Hebrew *tahushu*—a fine example of the types of disjunctions that occur when sources are reworked but not completely reformulated.[36]

(2) The reason R. Eliezer provides for the law is also new in the BT (d2).[37] Shamma Friedman has observed that this halakhic logic borrows from a *sugya* at bHul 7a[38]:

> R. Shimon b. Elyaqim said in the name of R. Eleazar b. Pedat, who said in the name of R. Eleazar b. Shamua: "Those who came up from Egypt [to the Land of Israel] conquered many cities which the [exiles] who came up from Babylonia did not conquer." **And he reasoned:** Because the first consecration held only for that time but not for the future, they [who returned from Babylonia] left them [Ammon and Moab unconsecrated] in order that the poor could depend on them [for the tithe] during the Sabbatical year.

The logic attributed to R. Eliezer in the BT form of the *baraita* combines an Amoraic explanation of a Tannaitic source (R. Shimon b. Elyaqim's explanation of R. Eleazar b. Shamua) followed by an anonymous (Stammaitic) explication of this Amoraic reasoning, marked by the term *qasavar* ("and he reasoned"). In Friedman's words, "behold a *baraita* that contains the reasoning of the anonymous Talmud." In fact, the Tannaim in mYad 4:3 proffer other arguments why Ammon and Moab should give the poorman's tithe during the Sabbatical year, but the Bavli redactors ignore these in favor of this more abstract formulation of the Stammaim at bHul 7b.[39] The significant changes in the BT form of the *baraita* indicate that we cannot consider it authentic, but rather a pseudo-*baraita*.

(3) In two brilliant studies, Shlomo Naeh has called attention to the profound changes in the text and content of the Bavli version of R. Eleazar b. Azariah's third homily over against the Toseftan source.[40] Naeh argues that the Tosefta contains two independent exegetical traditions based on clauses of Qoh 12:11; the first composed of sections i–iv + vi, the second of v + vii. The second exegesis interrupts the first, as section v is part of the second but appears between iv and vi, and it addresses a distinct issue.[41] The Bavli, however, integrates these sections with the others to form one longer, more complex homily such that iv, v, and vi should be read consecutively.

Most importantly, the content of both Toseftan exegeses has been transformed completely in the Bavli's version.[42] The first Toseftan exegesis praises the Oral Torah and its teachers, the sages ("*the words of the sages* are like . . ."). Sections i–iii celebrate the Oral Torah as life-bringing, fertile, and stable in much the same way as in the Bavli's version discussed above (these sections are the most similar in the two texts). Section iv lauds the sages who transmit and expound the Torah and issue correct rulings *without disagreements:* they declare "about the impure in its place and about the pure in its place."[43] The concluding section, vi, which moves to the next clause of Qoh 12:11, makes an assertion about the *source* of the Oral Torah: like the Written Torah, the Oral Torah was revealed to Moses on Mt. Sinai.[44]

The second exegesis in the Tosefta deals with the problem of memorizing traditions (sections v + vii).[45] There are a myriad of traditions and disagreements on a great many topics. In the oral milieu of the sages, how is the student to keep these rulings straight and remember exactly who said what? How can one recall whether the "House of Shammai declares impure" and the "House of Hillel declares pure" or the reverse, and whether "R. So-and-so forbids" and "R. So-and-so permits" or the opposite? This is what causes the despairing student to wonder "how then shall I learn Torah?" Section vii provides the solution to this potential textual chaos by directing the student

to "make for yourself a heart of many rooms and place therein the words" of each sage or party, that is, to make a "memory palace" with every tradition in a given location.[46] To construct such a "memory palace" or similar structure with rooms and chambers was a common metaphor for mnemonic training in antiquity and throughout the Middle Ages. According to Naeh, the biblical verses cited in section v illustrate the methods by which texts are remembered, categorized, and ordered so as to construct the memory palace. The many "words" that are not clear must be defined and identified ("the words") and then categorized and organized ("these are the words"), so that they are memorized correctly and known ("all these words").[47]

The Bavli version combines and transforms these two exegeses into the homily discussed above. For the Bavli the problem is not the memorizing of traditions but the halakhic disputes and the factionalism or schism that may result. Note the significant transformation of section iv: in the Toseftan version, the sages "declare about the impure that it is impure and about the pure that it is pure, about the impure in its place and about the pure in its place." There is one halakhic truth, and the sages, when they assemble to study together, set it forth clearly. In the Bavli, however, when the sages gather in assemblies they express contradictory opinions, "some pronounce unclean and others pronounce clean, some prohibit and others permit, some declare unfit and others declare fit." This problem of contradictory interpretations and the difficulty of ascertaining the halakhic truth is what causes the student to despair, not the difficulty of memorizing traditions.[48] The problem is first addressed by section vi, now integrated with the preceding section and bearing a very different meaning, the paradoxical theological statement that all the mutually contradictory opinions indeed "were given by one shepherd."[49] In place of the Tosefta's assertion that both the Written and Oral Torah originated on Sinai—a claim found in numerous rabbinic midrashim[50]—the Bavli version declares that mutually contradictory rabbinic rulings all derive from the divine revelation at Sinai. The solution is therefore to "make your ear like a hopper," to collect the disparate opinions, and to "acquire a perceptive heart to understand" the contradictory rulings (vii)—a very different project from the Tosefta's directive to make a memory palace "and place therein" the different opinions in the appropriate locations so that they can be memorized.

Naeh concludes that the Bavli version is not an independent tradition but a reworking of the Tosefta. However, he leaves open the question whether the changes were deliberately carried out for ideological reasons or were simply the results of efforts to resolve the difficulties in understanding the confused order of the Toseftan version. He also leaves open

the question of when the reworking occurred, whether in the time of the Bavli redactors or by even later (medieval?) copyists who wished to improve the reading.[51]

Daniel Boyarin, building on these studies by Naeh and on my earlier work on the Stammaitic academy as the *Sitz im Leben* for late Bavli narratives, has discussed the "multivocal" view of truth of the Bavli's version and has shown its affinities to the ideology of other sources found exclusively in the Bavli.[52] A number of late Bavli traditions exalt the virtues of endless debate and argumentation, resisting any notion of a single or univocal truth. The goal of Torah study, these traditions suggest, cannot be to arrive at "the truth," as there is no one correct answer; hence, ideal study of Torah consists of continual discussion and debate. Tannaitic sources, by contrast, regret that "disagreements have multiplied in Israel,"[53] finding that this unfortunate situation complicates the search for the single truth and leads to factionalism. Thus, Boyarin's work tends to point to a more deliberate—or at least ideologically driven—process of reworking.

(4) Although the work of Naeh and Boyarin leaves little doubt that we are dealing with a distinct Babylonian ideology; there are no direct parallels within the Bavli to the language of the main reworkings (iv, vii). The description of sages as "some pronouncing unclean and others pronouncing clean, some prohibiting and others permitting, some declaring unfit and others declaring fit" is unique.[54] It draws on and modifies descriptions of the diagreements between the Houses of Hillel and Shammai in Tannaitic sources (and in the Yerushalmi): "Even though these forbid and those permit, these declare unfit and these declare fit, the House of Shammai did not refrain from marrying women of the House of Hillel, and the House of Hillel did not refrain from marrying women of the House of Shammai. All the purities and impurities which these declare pure and those declare impure . . ." (mYev 1:4).[55] The closest parallel is the account of Palestinian emissaries who travel to Babylonia to protest the intercalation of the calendar in the diaspora: "He began to rule impure and they (the emissaries) ruled pure; he forbade and they permitted" (bBer 63a). In this story, however, the emissaries intentionally rule the opposite so as to teach a lesson to the Babylonians, who indeed object to the phony rulings.[56] As far as I know, there are no other generalized depictions of the sages as a group disagreeing with each other as if this were typical rabbinic activity. At best there is some vague affinity to the motif found in several Stammaitic stories of sages propounding "twenty-four objections and solutions," which implies an extended disagreement wherein one sage's claims are consistently rejected by his colleague. Yet, these images of extended dialectical argumentation are

not identical to that of the sages issuing conflicting rulings on numerous discrete points of law. While the ideology is consistent with other late Bavli sources, as Boyarin argues, it attains its fullest and clearest expression here. It is worth noting that this picture of irresolvable debate and multiple truth seems to better suit an academy populated by numerous masters and students than a disciple-circle with one authoritative master.[57]

(5) Let me briefly comment on the "whose Sabbath was it" tradition (B1), as this has caused some confusion. Several scholars (following the traditional commentators) have claimed that this phrase is an "allusion" to the story of the deposition of Rabban Gamaliel (bBer 27b–28a), analyzed in the previous chapter (see section n), which ends with a power-sharing arrangement between Rabban Gamaliel and R. Eleazar b. Azariah such that Rabban Gamaliel preaches three Sabbaths and R. Eleazar b. Azariah one Sabbath.[58] The conclusion of that story notes: "This explains the tradition (*vehaynu de'amar mar*), 'Whose Sabbath was it? It was [the Sabbath] of R. Eleazar b. Azariah.'" As even this brief citation reveals, the allusion goes the other way: the story of Rabban Gamaliel is the later tradition and alludes[59]—actually quotes—our story. This must be the case, as tSot 7:9 already contains R. Yehoshua's question "Whose Sabbath was it?" But the notion of a rotation of preaching duties occurs only in the Bavli version of the story of Rabban Gamaliel in bBerakhot, not in any Tannaitic source, nor in the parallel Yerushalmi account (yBer 4:1, 7d), which concludes that R. Eleazar b. Azariah was not completely demoted from office but appointed head of the court. Clearly, the genuine Tannaitic tradition of the Tosefta cannot be predicated on the later Bavli account (which, as we argued, shows signs of Stammaitic reworking[60]). While the story of Rabban Gamaliel in the Bavli *presents itself* as the earlier event, indeed as the etiology for R. Yehoshua's query as to the identity of the preacher on that particular Sabbath, it was *composed* later, and it used the "Whose Sabbath was it?" tradition (either directly from tSot 7:9 or from bHag 3b) in its reworking of the Yerushalmi parallel. The tradition, "Whose Sabbath was it?" in tSot 7:9 and bHag 3b should therefore be taken at face value. R. Yehoshua simply asks who happened to speak on that Sabbath at the house of study.[61]

Redactional Context

Our aggadic *sugya* is located in the Talmudic commentary to mHag 1:1, which deals with the commandment of *re'iah*, the obligation of male Israelites to "appear" before God in the temple on the three pilgrimage festivals (Exod 23:14–17, Deut 16:16–17). The Mishna exempts "deaf mutes (*heresh*),

imbeciles and minors" from the obligation, and the Talmud proceeds to discuss these exemptions. A distinction is then made between individuals who can neither hear nor speak, who are completely exempt from the obligation, and those who can hear but not speak or speak but not hear, who are exempt from the *re'iah* offering but obligated in the associated precept of rejoicing (*simha*). The Talmud explains their exemption from the *re'iah* offering by drawing an analogy to the septennial gathering (*haqhel*), and then quoting and interpreting Deut 31:12. The subsequent discussion adduces Deut 31:11, also about *haqhel*. The aggadic *sugya* follows shortly thereafter.

Our text appears to be contextualized here because of its invocation of *haqhel* and its citation of Deut 31:12, the base verse of the first of R. Eleazar b. Azariah's homilies. After citing Deut 31:12 for the halakhic needs of the *sugya*, the redactors apparently inserted our aggadic *sugya* because it also interprets Deut 31:12.

The parallel *sugya* in the PT supports this understanding. To mHag 1:1 the PT comments as follows:

> The Mishna applies to the [obligation] to appear and bring a sacrifice, but as for the obligation to appear in one's person (*re'iat panim*), even a minor is obligated. [This is derived] from the following: *Gather the people—men, women and children* (taf) *(Deut 31:12)*. And are minors (*qatan*) [not] greater than "children" (*taf*)?
>
> For we learned (*detanya*): Once R. Yohanan b. Beroka and R. Eleazar Hisma were traveling from Yavneh to Lod and visited (*lehaqbil*) R. Yehoshua . . . (yHag 1:1, 75d)

The PT cites a version of tTos 7:9 that includes the first homily followed immediately by R. Yehoshua's praise of Eleazar b. Azariah (C'). While the term *detanya,* "For we learned," generally introduces a source as proof for the preceding claim, that is not the case here. Proof for the PT's claim comes from the verse and the following brief inference,[62] and the *baraita* is cited because it too interprets Deut 31:12.[63]

Thus, the PT too inserts a version of tSot 7:9 after the *sugya* draws an analogy to *haqhel* and cites Deut 31:12, the base verse of the homily. While the Bavli cites Deut 31:12 for a different halakhic purpose—in connection with the deaf-mute rather than the minor—the progression leading to the incorporation of tSot 7:9 is similar. Unlike the Tosefta, neither the Bavli nor the Yerushalmi places the *baraita* in Tractate Sotah in the context of *haqhel*, which in turn appears in connection with liturgies that must be recited in Hebrew.[64]

At first glance, then, the Bavli redactors do not appear to have contextualized the aggadic *sugya* on the basis of any substantive connection to the content of the halakhic *suyga* that explicates mHag 1:1. The aggadic *sugya* was produced when the redactors added a second similar story, that of R. Eliezer, to the story of R. Yehoshua and his students, which itself was included because it contains an exegesis of a scriptural verse cited earlier in the halakhic *sugya*. In other words, they did not place the finished aggadic *sugya* in this context, but rather created the aggadic *sugya* after the story of R. Yehoshua was already contextualized here for associative reasons, as already found in the PT. Nevertheless, certain parallel themes emerge when the aggadic *sugya* is evaluated in its redactional context. There is a type of parallel between the obligation of *re'iah*, journeying to the temple and honoring God, the Master of the Universe, and the students' journeying to their masters and honoring them with their presence. That the Stammaim were most concerned with the disciples' showing appropriate honor to masters fits well with this analysis. Rashi even comments that the students visited R. Yehoshua on a festival, and refers to bRH 16b: "R. Yizhaq stated, 'A man must visit (*lehaqbil pnei*) his master on the festival.'"[65] And this expression for "visit" (*lehaqbil pnei*), literally "receive the face," is somewhat parallel to the biblical expression "to appear before God" (*leira'ot et pnei)*, which appears in the *haqhel* paragraph (Deut 31:11). Perhaps we can even see the connection in terms of the shift from biblical religion, based on the temple and its priests, to rabbinic Judaism, based on synagogues, houses of study, and rabbis, and from holiness associated with locations such as temples to individual holy men such as rabbinic masters.[66] The redaction of the aggadic *sugya* in the context of mHag 1:1 could be seen as arguing for a kind of transference of religious devotion from the temple to the rabbinic master, and even to the sages in general, who are lauded in the third homily. Whereas in biblical times the Israelite appeared before God in the temple to show honor and homage, in the time of the storytellers the disciple appears before his master. While I would not press this point, given the other reasons for the juxtaposition of the *sugya* here, I would not rule it out either, as we often find multiple connections between texts and their redactional contexts. Moreover, this consideration of the redactional context lends some support to our conclusions above concerning the redactors' role in the production of the aggadic *sugya*. If we take the PT as roughly equivalent to the state of the *sugya* in early Amoraic times, we can glean a general sense of the contribution of the Bavli redactors, even allowing for some development in the last generations of Bavli Amoraim (although none are mentioned by name). It appears that the redactors cited the *baraita* in its entirety from tSot 7–9

(and not just from the first homily, as in the PT) and then juxtaposed a second account, which they reworked as describe above.

Conclusion

The Stammaim produced an aggadic *sugya* to warn disciples about proper academic conduct and to underscore the importance of honoring the master, despite the almost complete absence of these themes in their sources. In this respect we see a similar transformation of earlier sources, as in the case of the famous story of the "Oven of Akhnai" (bBM 59a; yMQ 3:1, 81c–d). This story too presents fascinating views of the nature of rabbinic authority, Torah, and the original divine revelation vis-à-vis rabbinic interpretation, and has generally been adduced by modern scholars on account of such interests.[67] Yet, within its redactional context in the Bavli, the main lesson of the story, which shows clear signs of reworking by the Stammaim, concerns the severity of the sin of "verbal wronging," namely the humiliation of R. Eliezer by the sages. This theme is completely absent in the earlier version of the story preserved in the Yerushalmi. Likewise, the fascinating paradoxical view of multivalent halakhic truth contained in the third homily is not the focus of the Bavli *sugya* but incidental to the redactors' interests in master-disciple relationships. A similar transformation also characterizes the brief story of Rabban Gamaliel summoning seven elders to intercalate the year (ySanh 1:2, 18c; bSanh 11a). Here, too, the Yerushalmi teaches a lesson about the need to actively pursue Torah, while the Bavli version, which again shows signs of Stammaitic reworking, emphasizes the importance of not shaming others.[68] The parallel transformation of these three sets of stories underscores the critical importance of honor and shame in the culture of the Stammaim.

APPENDIX: MANUSCRIPT VARIANTS

Only major variants are listed here. The manuscript abbreviations are from Sokoloff, *DJBA*, 56–57. The base text is London, BM Harley 5508 (400) = L. Munich 95 = M; Munich 6 = M^2; Göttingen 3 = G; Oxford, Opp. 248 (367) = O^2; Vatican 134 = V^{17}; Vatican 171 = V^{20}. Orthographic variants and obvious errors are not listed. Additional variants can be found in Rabbinovicz, *Diqduqei sofrim* (*DQS*).

(I)(B1): "Teaching of law." All other mss omit "of law," as in (a).

(B3): "Confer reward (*leqabel sekhar*)." V^{20} = "give reward" (*latet sekhar*). V^{17} omits "reward" (apparently an error). M^2 = "raise a reward" (*leha'alot sekhar*).

(D): M^2 begins this section: "When they saw that his mind was set at ease, they said . . ." This addition uses the same phrase that describes R. Eliezer calming down at the end of the second anecdote (c'), which sharpens the contrast.

(D): "I will make you a unique object of praise in this world." V^{17} omits (the first occurence). V^{20} omits the second "You made me a unique object of praise." O^2 omits "in the world" throughout.

(D): "Those who study them." V^{20} = "the man, those who study them." M, M^2, G, O^2 = "the heart of those who study them."

(D): "A perceptive heart (*lev shome'a*) to understand (*liqnot*)." V^{17}, V^{20}, M, M^2 = "a heart to perceive." G = "a heart to perceive from the words (*midivrei*) of those who pronounce unclean." O^2 = "a heart to perceive and understand" (*lehavin*).

(D): "Some pronounce unclean and some pronounce clean." The order (unclean/clean, prohibit/permit, etc.) varies in the mss, and some omit one of the couplets.

(II)(a): "As we learned" (*detanya*). M^2 = *detenan*, which typically introduces a Mishna, apparently referring to mYad 4:3. See *DQS* ad loc., n. *tet*.

(d2): "What is the reason?" is wanting in L, but some such phrase must be understood. It appears in all other mss. All of d2 appears in the margin in M^2. M reads in Aramaic: "As for them—why did they say [this?]? They reasoned . . ." and continues with the explanation in Hebrew ("Those who came up . . ."). The "them/they" would appear to be those in the house of study. According to this reading, the explanation is not for R. Eliezer (who knew the law as a tradition passed down from Moses) but for those who voted in the study house, and it provides the reason for their decision. This reading obviates the problem noted above (see n. 36). But, given the clear motivation to make such a change and the weight of the manuscript evidence, I think this reading should be seen as a scribal correction. See Friedman, *Talmud Arukh*, 1:9 and the notes there, and *DQS* ad loc., n. *lamed*.

(d2): "Sabbatical Year." V^{17} adds "outside of the land, to plow and sow, as the Sabbatical year only applies within the Land." This appears to be an explanatory gloss.

Chapter 7

A Warning to Masters: Rebuff and Rejection (Sotah 47a)

The twin stories of Elisha and Gehazi and of Joshua b. Perahia and Jesus, like the stories of the previous chapter, focus on master-disciple relationships. Here, too, we have a single unit composed of two stories that share elements of plot and dialogue. In this composition, however, the warning is to the masters, rather than to the disciples, and the lesson emerges from the stories' complementarity, not from the contrast between them. This text thus offers an instructive continuation of some of the themes discussed in Chapter 6. This passage, too, has received an inordinate amount of scholarly attention concerning issues that differ from the primary interests of the storytellers: the mention of Jesus titillated scholars into a futile search for relevant historical information as to his life and provenance.[1] The bulk of scholarship centers on the tiresome question of whether the story has a historical kernel and what it is. Even those scholars who have noted the literary artistry of the stories generally employ their findings as evidence against the historicity of the source rather than as the basis for an appreciation of the stories on their own terms.[2]

I start with a literary analysis of the two stories, followed by a source-critical examination of the compositional history of the passage, including assessment of the redactional context. As we have seen in regard to other stories, here too the BT storytellers reworked earlier accounts, found in the PT, in part by drawing on other rabbinic passages. The final section of the chapter examines two parallels in late ancient Christian literature, both to help appreciate the distinctiveness of the Bavli version and

as an approach to the general cultural context. I will not attempt comprehensive references to all earlier scholarly literature, much of which is irrelevant to my interests, but only to those studies that bear directly on my concerns here.[3]

This passage appears in two locations in the Bavli, Sotah 47a and Sanhedrin 107b, in slightly different order. My primary analysis is founded on the version in Sotah 47a, for reasons to be explained below, though I will also consider the redactional context in each tractate and the question of primacy. The following text of bSot 47a is based on ms Munich 95. Major variants are noted in the chapter appendix, though I have kept these to a minimum, as comprehensive collation of variants can be found in the volumes of Tractate Sotah published by the Institute for the Complete Text of the Talmud, edited by Abraham Liss.[4] The two stories are preceded and followed by two relevant *baraitot*, set in small type to distinguish them from the narrative text.

[0] Our masters taught: Elisha was sick with three sicknesses: (i) One, because he instigated the bears against the children (2 Kgs 2:23–25). (ii) And one, because he **rebuffed** Gehazi with his two hands. (iii) And one, from which he died, as it says, *Elisha had been stricken with the illness of which he was to die (2 Kgs 13:14)*.

[1] Our masters taught: Always let the left [hand] **push away** (*dohah*) and the right [hand] bring near—not like Elisha who **rebuffed** (*dahaf*) Gehazi with his two hands, and not like Joshua b. Perahia who **rebuffed** (*dehafo*) Jesus the Notsri [Christian] with his two hands.

[a] "Elisha"—what is the reference?

[b1] As is written, *Naaman said, "Please take two talents." He urged him, and [he wrapped the two talents of silver in two bags and gave them, along with two changes of clothes, to two of his servants, who carried them ahead of him. When (Gehazi) arrived at the citadel,] he took [(the things) from them and deposited them in the house] (2 Kgs 5:23–24)*. And it is written *[Then he (Elisha) said to Gehazi], "Did not my spirit go along when a man got down from his chariot to meet you. [Is this a time to take silver and to take/buy (*velaqahta*) clothing and olive groves and vineyards, sheep and oxen, and male and female slaves?"] (2 Kgs 5:25–26)*.

[b2] Did he take all this? He only took money and clothes!

[c1] R. Yitshaq said: At that time Elisha was expounding [the chapter] *Eight Creeping Things* [= Tractate Shabbat 14].

[c2] He [Elisha] said to him [Gehazi], "Wicked one! Has the time come to take the reward [for studying the chapter] *Eight Creeping things*? *Surely the leprosy of Naaman shall cling to you and to your descendants forever." And as [Gehazi] left his presence, he was snow-white with leprosy (2 Kgs 5:27).*

[c3] *There were four men, lepers, outside the gate (2 Kgs 7:3).* R. Yohanan said, "This refers to Gehazi and his three sons."

[f1] *Elisha arrived in Damascus (2 Kgs 8:7).*[5] Why did he go? R. Yohanan said, "He went in order to cause Gehazi to return and repent." But he did not repent. He [Elisha] said to him, "Repent."

[f2] He [Gehazi] said to him, "Thus I have received a tradition from you: '*He who sins and leads the many to sin, they do not give him the opportunity to repent (= mAvot 5:18).*'"

[e] What did he [Gehazi do]?

[e1] Some say that he suspended a loadstone for the sin of Jeroboam (= the golden calves; 1 Kgs 12:25–30), placing it between heaven and earth.

[e2] And some say he engraved the Name [of God] on its [Jeroboam's calves'] mouth such that it said, *I [am the Lord your God] (Exod 20:2)* and *You shall have no other [gods besides me] (Exod 20:3).*

[e3] And some say he **pushed away** (*dahah*) the sages from before Elisha. As it is written, *The disciples of the prophets said to Elisha, "See, the place where we live [under your direction is too cramped for us"] (2 Kgs 6:1).* This implies that beforehand (before Gehazi's machinations) it was not too crowded.

[aa] "Joshua b. Perahia"—what is the reference?

[bb1] When Yannai the King was killing our rabbis <Shimon b. Shetah's sister hid him [= Shimon]>,[6] he [Joshua b. Perahia] fled to Alexandria in Egypt. When there was peace, Shimon b. Shetah sent to him [Joshua], "From me, Jerusalem the Holy City, to you, Alexandria, my sister! My husband lies in your midst, while I sit deserted." He [Joshua] thought, "This means there is peace."

[cc1] While he [Joshua] was coming [back], he arrived at a certain inn. They treated him with great honor. He said, "How fine is this *aksania* [inn]!" He [Jesus] said to him, "Master, her [the innkeeper's] eyes are slanted."[7]

[cc2] He [Joshua] said to him, "Wicked one! Are you occupied with that?" He sounded 400 shofar [blasts] and banned him.

[dd1] He [Jesus] came before him [Joshua] many times, but he did not take him back.

[dd2] One day while he [Joshua] was reciting the Shema, he [Jesus] came before him. He [Joshua] intended to take him back, [and] he gestured with his hand (to wait until he could finish the prayer). He [Jesus] thought that he was **pushing him away** *(dahi leih)*.

[ee1] He [Jesus] went and set up a brick and worshipped it.

[ff1] He [Joshua] said to him, "Repent!"

[ff2] He [Jesus] said to him, "Thus I have received a tradition from you: *'He who sins and leads the many to sin, they do not give him the opportunity to repent' (= mAvot 5:18)*."

[ee2] And there is a tradition[8]: "Jesus the Notsri, because he engaged in sorcery and enticed and turned Israel to idolatry."[9]

(2) It was taught: R. Shimon b. Eleazar says: (i) The inclination, (ii) a woman, and (iii) a child—let the left [hand] **push away** (*dohah*) and the right [hand] bring near.

Literary Analysis and Structure

An introductory *baraita* commences the double narrative and spells out the theme: one should not reject another individual in an overly harsh manner (pushing away "with two hands") but in such a way as to allow repentance and reconciliation (pushing away with the left hand, the weaker hand, while bringing near with the right, the stronger hand [section 1]). This opening also functions to bring the two narratives together into one unit, directing the interpreter to examine their common ground. A relatively straightforward two-part structure, with a similar question introducing each character's account (a, aa), contributes to the thematic unity. Slightly unusual,

though by no means unprecedented, is the juxtaposition of accounts of biblical and rabbinic figures in the same narrative complex.[10] An exegetical narrative about biblical figures has been combined with a sage-story about rabbis to communicate the storyteller's message. The double narrative is preceded and followed by thematically relevant *baraitot* (0, 2; printed in small type), both mentioning a "rebuff" (*dehafo*) or "pushing away" (*dohah*) with hands, and both displaying a tripartite structure, to provide additional structural symmetry and narrative cohesion.

Like all exegetical narratives, that of Elisha and Gehazi unfolds along two dimensions. The exegetical axis interprets 2 Kgs 5:23–6:1, the account of Gehazi's dealings with Naaman followed by his interchange with, and punishment by, Elisha (b1, c1–2, e3). Explication of this series of verses is supplemented by a brief comment on 2 Kgs 7:3 (c3), a prooftext of sorts, and by an interpretation of 2 Kgs 8:7 (f1), which the homilist connects to the events of 2 Kgs 5:23–6:1.

The narrative axis centers on the demise of the relationship between Elisha and Gehazi: Gehazi's sin provokes Elisha to curse him with leprosy (b–c), which causes Gehazi to become a heretic and sinner (e), and Elisha's efforts at reconciliation fail (f2). Much of the final two stages of the story (e1–e2, f2) lack exegetical motivation. As Joshua Levinson has shown, exegetical narratives in the Bavli and in later midrashim evince a weakening of the exegetical dimension and a predominance of the narrative when the thematic coherence begins to outweigh exegesis of Scripture as the organizing principle and source of authority.[11] These characteristics are exemplified here, as critical aspects of the narrative make no reference to Scripture but clearly contribute to the theme stated at the outset. I have skipped from c to e in the structure, omitting d, in order to facilitate comparison with the second narrative, which has a similar structure but includes an additional section (dd). Note, too, that section f precedes e in the narrative discourse, though not in the fabula, as Gehazi's sins, committed in e, take place before the conversation recounted in f; for this reason—and again to facilitate comparisons between the two stories—these sections are labeled in reverse order. These points will be addressed in greater detail below.

The exegetical irritant for the Elisha-Gehazai story is the apparent gap between 2 Kgs 5:23 and 5:26 posed by the question in b2. Gehazi receives clothes and silver/money from Naaman (5:23), but Elisha rebukes him for taking eight things: (1) silver, (2) clothing, (3) olive groves, (4) vineyards, (5) sheep, (6) oxen, (7) male slaves, (8) female slaves. The double meaning of the Hebrew verb *laqah* as both "take" and "buy" in 5:26 is partially responsible for the confusion; Elisha means that Gehazi has *taken* (*velaqahta*)

the silver to *get* or *buy* (*velaqahta*) the other six items, while the exegete reads the prophet as suggesting that Gehazi has *taken* all eight.[12] Moreover, even if Elisha understands that Gehazi will buy goods with the silver, why list these eight items specifically? To resolve the exegetical tension the interpreter reads the eight items as a reward, measure-for-measure, for the chapter of Mishna (or Talmud) that Elisha, Gehazi, and the other students had been studying, "Eight creeping things." These words open the fourteenth chapter of Tractate Shabbat, a reference to the eight types of reptiles listed in the Torah that convey impurity by touch (Lev 11:29–30). The Bavli's glaring, if typical, "rabbinization" of the biblical figures depicts Elisha and his retinue of prophetic apprentices ("sons of the prophets"/ *bnei haneviim*) as rabbinic disciples learning in a study house, and as having been occupied with just this chapter. In this way Elisha's rebuke becomes intelligible: he reproaches Gehazi for coveting a reward in this world for the study of Torah, the eight items corresponding to the "Eight creeping things" of the chapter.

In the biblical account Elisha curses Gehazi with leprosy for his disobedience, greed, and untruth. In the exegetical narrative, Gehazi's inappropriate focus on material reward for Torah study is primarily to blame. This preoccupation provokes Elisha's ire, for true rabbinic piety understands that God bestows the reward for Torah study in the world to come.[13] Thus, in the rabbinic retelling, Elisha stresses, "Has *the time come* (*higi'a zeman*) to take the reward?" This is an interpretation of the verse "*Is this the time* (*ha'et*) to take money . . . ?" which shifts the understanding of "the time" from "now" or "this situation" to "this world," as opposed to the next. However, if Gehazi's action draws Elisha's wrath, Elisha's response draws the storyteller's criticism. While Gehazi's deportment certainly deserved blame, Elisha went too far, rejecting his disciple "with both hands." That Gehazi himself should suffer from a disfiguring ailment "forever" would seem to be a harsh penalty, and yet the affliction even continues among his descendants for all time.[14] R. Yohanan's exegesis of 2 Kgs 7:3 functions in this regard as a type of prooftext to verify that Elisha's curse in fact materialized (c3). Soon thereafter (two chapters later!) we see that Gehazi's sons contracted the condition and the entire family find themselves ostracized outside of the city.

Rejected in this severe and permanent manner, Gehazi abandons his pursuit of Torah and becomes a sinful heretic (e). As noted above, the catalog of his sins is deferred until after the account of Elisha's failed effort at reconciliation (f1–f2). There appear to be several reasons for this minor temporal disorder. First, the storyteller thereby communicates his main lesson

directly after the rebuke (c2), namely that such "two-handed" rejections should be avoided because they are potentially irremediable. Second, the exegetical axis of the narrative continues with the interpretation of 2 Kgs 8:7 to ground the reconciliation attempt (f1), whereas Gehazi's sins, or at least two of them, are not generated by interpretation of verses from these chapters of 2 Kgs (e1–e2). In other words, here the exegetical axis takes precedence over the narrative axis insofar as it disrupts straightforward temporal order.

To follow the exegetical thread: 2 Kgs 8:7 presents an interpretive problem, the reason for Elisha's journey (f1). His visit to Damascus does not appear to be connected to the preceding story in 2 Kgs 8:1–6, the account of the Shunnamite woman's effort to reclaim her land from the king.[15] Nor does it connect clearly with what follows: the full verse reads, "Elisha arrived in Damascus. Now King Ben-hadad of Aram was sick, and it was told him, saying, 'The man of God is on his way here.'"[16] While Ben-hadad takes advantage of Elisha's presence to consult the prophet about his illness, nothing explicit suggests that Elisha came there for that reason. Our storyteller therefore presents the purpose of Elisha's journey as being to seek out and reconcile with his disciple, removing this verse from its obscure context in 2 Kgs 8 and recontextualizing it within the Gehazi saga. It should be noted that Gehazi does feature in the account of the Shunnamite woman in 2 Kgs 8:1–6, where he recounts to an unnamed king some of the "wonderful things" that Elisha has done.[17] The exegete may therefore be relying on the principle of *semikhut parshiyyot* ("adjacent sections") in connecting Elisha's journey in 2 Kgs 8:7 to his interactions with Gehazi. Scholars find the chronology of 2 Kgs 8–9 extremely problematic and consider several of the episodes to be displaced from the temporal order, so the exegetical move is understandable.

Tragically, Elisha's effort comes too late, as Gehazi informs his master that he has already crossed the point of no return (f2). Ironically, he has come to that conclusion from the teachings learned from Elisha himself, that certain sins are so heinous as to preclude the possibility of repentance (mAvot 5:18). It is unclear whether Elisha would agree with Gehazi and only beckons his disciple to repent because he does not know the extent of the transgressions, or whether he invites Gehazi to return despite the sins and the ostensible meaning of the tradition. If the latter, then the story involves a secondary theme of a tragic misunderstanding: Gehazi has misinterpreted the tradition he learned from his master and mistakenly concluded that he cannot repent. In either case, we learn that Elisha's harsh rebuff permanently alienated his disciple such that no reconciliation was possible.

We should also note that if Elisha's journey to reconcile with Gehazi is exegetically grounded (f1), Gehazi's refusal is not (f2) and must be seen as a further thematic development.

The narrative concludes with three opinions as to the nature of Gehazi's sin (e1–e3), which, he professed to Elisha, also "led the many to sin" (f2). The first two opinions claim that he became an idolater and attempted to attract others to worship idols, while the third opinion suggests that he caused Elisha's (rabbinized) disciples to desist from study. He therefore caused nonrabbis to abandon worship of the true God or, in the rabbinized version, students to abandon Torah.[18] Here are the tragic consequences of the severe rebuke: not only does the rebuffed disciple abandon Torah, but he seeks revenge by leading others to do the same, a type of "sin leads to more sin" (*aveira goreret aveira*), as the rabbinic adage goes.[19] Note that the final opinion mentions Gehazi "pushing away" the other disciples, echoing the opening line, "Always let the left hand push away," thereby "enclosing" the story in the envelope structure that is often found in Bavli narratives (e3).[20]

This final opinion (e3) also returns to the exegetical thread of the narrative with an interpretation of 2 Kgs 6:1, the verse immediately following that which grounds Gehazi's punishment/rebuff (2 Kgs 5:27; section c2). Here, too, there is a problem of cause and effect or motivation in the biblical account: What prompts the disciples to suddenly feel that their space is too cramped? The exegesis resolves the difficulty by connecting their observation to the events of the previous verse. As a result of Elisha's striking Gehazi with leprosy, Gehazi vengefully did or said something to convince the students that they were crowded in their space and should depart. They proceed to cross the Jordan and build another "space" (*maqom*) in which to dwell (2 Kgs 6:2), transformed into their abandoning Elisha's "space of learning" or study-house.[21] The previous two opinions concerning Gehazi's idolatrous activity (e1–e2), on the other hand, receive no exegetical prooftext, or any other justification for that matter, as noted above. I will return to this issue when I discuss the composition of the story, but for now one point is in order. The association with idolatry accounts much more satisfactorily for Gehazi's confession to have "caused others to sin." While inducing Elisha's disciples to leave their master is certainly no mitsvah, it does not really qualify under this rubric. Thus, the opinions about idolatry (which lack exegetical anchors) better suit the narrative dimension of the exegetical narrative, whereas the opinion about cramping the students (which lacks a tight connection with the thematics) better fits the exegetical dimension. This is exactly what we would expect, given the weakening of

the exegetical dimension at the expense of the thematic unity of narrative mentioned above.

In sum, Bavli midrashic traditions routinely "rabbinize" biblical sages, advisors, and prophets by portraying them as rabbis, and depicting their assistants, servants, and apprentices as rabbinic disciples.[22] Here, an exegetical narrative transforms the biblical account of a prophet and disobedient servant into a tale of a rabbi and sinful disciple. In a thematic development beyond the exegesis of the biblical passage, the Bavli adds that Gehazi responded to Elisha's rebuke with terrible sins that prevented repentance and reconciliation. The story thus functions as a cautionary tale for rabbis on how to relate to their students and the terrible consequences that can result from harshly rejecting aspiring disciples.

The second story of the unit, the fallout between R. Joshua b. Perahia and Jesus, exemplifies the same primary theme as the first story and reveals a similar narrative structure. After the character is mentioned (aa), an exposition (bb) provides the background that leads up to a disciple's sin (cc1), which provokes a harsh rebuff from his master (cc2). The disciple apostasizes and commits more heinous sins (ee1–ee2), and the master's attempt at reconciliation fails (ff1–ff2). There is a slight improvement in the narrative order: the storyteller recounts part of Jesus's apostasy (ee1) before Joshua's exhortation to repent (ff1), whereas these events are related in the reverse order in the first story, as noted above. Here too, however, the full account of Jesus's sin appears only after the confrontation with his master (ff2), so in this respect the structures are quite parallel. The main difference is that the Joshua-Jesus story adds stages to the demise of the master-disciple relationship (dd1–dd2): Jesus initially approaches Joshua in an effort to reconcile but continues to be rejected (dd1), and in the end he misunderstands Joshua's gesture of acceptance (dd2). Thus, the two stories have similar structures yet include variation, as series of stories often do.[23] The following diagram highlights the parallel structures.

(o) Our masters taught: Elisha was sick with three sicknesses . . . . One, because he **rebuffed** Gehazi with two hands.

(1) Our masters taught: Always let the left hand **push away** . . . not like Elisha who **rebuffed** Gehazi . . . and not like Joshua b. Perahia who **rebuffed** Jesus . . . .

(a) "Elisha"—what is the reference?

(aa) "Joshua b. Perahia"—what is the reference?

(b) Exposition: Gehazi and Naaman	(bb) Exposition: Joshua and Jesus flee
(c1) Gehazi's sin: takes reward for Torah study	(cc1) Jesus's sin: looks at woman
(c2) Elisha rebuffs Gehazi with leprosy	(cc2) Joshua rebuffs Jesus with the ban
(c3) prooftext: Gehazi and his sons	
	(dd1–2) Jesus approaches Joshua/ misunderstanding with Shema and gesture
	(ee1) Jesus sins: worships brick
(f1) Elisha asks Gehazi to repent	(ff1) Joshua asks Jesus to repent
(f2) Gehazi explains that he cannot repent; mAvot 5:18	(ff2) Jesus explains that he cannot repent; mAvot 5:18
(e1–e3) Gehazi's sins: leading others astray	(ee2) Jesus's sins: leading others astray

(2) It was taught: The inclination, a woman, and a child—let the left [hand] **push away** and the right [hand] bring near.

The exposition of the second story, the flight to Alexandria and return, is somewhat longer than necessary (bb).[24] This account is not connected thematically to the story and functions primarily to provide motivation for a stay at an inn and the concomitant misunderstanding of the praise. However, the exposition may call attention in a very general way to hostility, separation, and return, ideas that intersect in some respects with the story. In addition, we might venture that the report of hostility/killing leading to separation (the flight) followed by peace and (physical) return bears some structural similarity to the story's account of hostility (verbal rebuff) leading to separation (the ban) followed by attempted peace and efforts for (moral) return. If it does, there is a pointed inversion of the final stage: Joshua b. Perahia eventually returns to his former position in Jerusalem despite the period of

killing, whereas Jesus cannot return to his former position as disciple. This might underscore the dangers of a two-handed rebuff and amplify the criticism of the rabbinic master: whereas kings and their killings ultimately cease and allow for return, the hostile rejection by a rabbinic master can be so severe as to preclude return and reconciliation. A second aspect of the exposition that warrants some thought is the curious language with which Shimon b. Shetah "invites" his colleague to return. We might note that the affectionate tone and flowery, familial metaphors (sister,[25] husband) differ from Joshua b. Perahia's harsh language of rebuke, contributing to the points of contrast with the story. Here is a model for the type of polite speech the sages should employ, as opposed to Joshua b. Perahia's mean and insulting tone.

Neither of these possibilities should be pressed, as they are admittedly speculative and because source-criticism will suggest a different and much more straightforward answer (see below). But, to the extent that we try to read the story as a literary unity, we should attempt to relate its parts in a coherent manner.

The main thematic development in the Jesus story is the addition of the aforementioned subtheme of misunderstanding. Jesus misunderstands his master's praise for the quality of the inn or the hospitality he receives as admiration of the innkeeper's appearance—the Aramaic *aksania* can mean either inn or (female) innkeeper (cc1). He then misunderstands Joshua b. Perahia's indication that he means to accept his disciple for a further rebuff (dd2). And perhaps he has also misunderstood his master's teaching, as he asserts that he cannot repent despite the solicitation to do so (ff2), unless we assume that Joshua was as yet unaware of the nature of Jesus's sins; above we noted that this element of the Gehazi story is ambiguous. The subtheme renders Jesus a much more sympathetic figure than Gehazi. Whereas Gehazi acted brazenly and then lied outright to his master, Jesus made an error in his interpretation of an ambiguous word. True, we cannot call his utterance an "innocent mistake," at least not in the eyes of his master: were Jesus not lasciviously minded in the first place, the alternative meaning never would have occurred to him. Yet it was hardly the calculated deception and prevarication committed by Gehazi.[26] Moreover, Jesus's several attempts to reconcile, only to be repeatedly turned away, stand to his credit.

The "misunderstanding" motif adds a tragic element to the Jesus story, which provides another point of variation against that of Gehazi. Had Jesus happened to make that final approach at a time when his master was not reciting the Shema and therefore unable to answer, the disaster would have been averted; and had Jesus not misinterpreted the sign, all would have been well. Tragically, the confluence of the wrong time and the wrong in-

terpretation led to misfortune. All the more reason to be extremely careful when reproving a disciple.

Besides including this tragic element, the addition of this episode connects nicely to the general narrative theme in that it involves a gesture of the *hand*, recalling the opening warning against rebuffing with two hands and the mentions of pushing away with the left hand and bringing near with the right. The storytellers could have conjured up some other type of misunderstanding, but they invented the episode with the Shema so as to involve the hands. (Indeed, the episode seems decidedly unrealistic: the Shema is not so lengthy a prayer that it would have been impossible for Joshua b. Perahia to finish the recitation and yell to, or run after, or send for Jesus to clarify his intention.) We thus have a type of playful literalization of the metaphors of rebuffing with two hands and pushing away with the left hand. The master, in a way, more literally pushes the disciple away with his hand, as opposed to the earlier rebuke ("Wicked one!") and ban and Elisha's curse, which are verbal rebuffs.

Like Gehazi, the rejected Jesus commits a cardinal sin, worshipping a brick, an idol (ee1). Now, this sin in and of itself would not necessarily preclude repentance or lead others astray, as Jesus claims to have done (ff2).[27] A postscript therefore notes that Jesus also enticed others to idolatry and committed sorcery as well (ee2). This addendum, clearly borrowed from elsewhere (see below), serves a crucial narrative purpose in revealing why repentance was impossible.

This narrative demonstrates again the heavily internal focus of the Bavli and its emphasis on the academy and relations between rabbis.[28] On some level, of course, the story is an etiology for the origin of Christianity. The foundation of the Christian heresy and its break from Judaism is traced to a disgruntled disciple who abandoned the true faith and enticed others to follow him. One can even detect some affinities to standard historical narratives of this process in the recognition that Christianity emerged from Jewish roots and that its founder was learned in Jewish tradition: in several Gospel passages his disciples refer to Jesus as "Rabbi."[29] But this account has been subordinated to the lesson about master-disciple relations such that the blame falls not on Jesus but on the great R. Joshua b. Perahia. Elsewhere, the Bavli has no trouble producing extremely negative sources about Jesus, such as the well-known tradition that Jesus's posthumous fate involves punishment with boiling excrement.[30] Nor is this to say that these traditions necessarily stand in tension with one another, but here the focus is not Jesus or Christianity as much as master-disciple relationships and proper deportment of sages.

Tradition History and Composition

As we might expect from the juxtaposition of stories of two disparate figures, a rabbinic sage and a biblical prophet, this composition has a complicated tradition history. The earliest component is the introductory *baraita* that articulates the lesson of the harsh rebuff (1). It appears in both the *Mekhilta* and *Mekhilta deRabbi Shimon bar Yohai* as follows: "Based on this they said (*mikan amru*): Let one always push away (*dohah*) with the left (hand) and bring near with the right (hand), not in the manner that Elisha did to Gehazi, and rebuffed him (*dehafo*) forever" (the *Mekhilta deRabbi Shimon bar Yohai* reads "who distanced him [*rehaqo*] forever.")[31] Apart from the minor variation in the description of harshness ("rebuffed him forever" vs. the BT's "with two hands"), the *baraita* speaks only of Gehazi and Elisha, not Joshua b. Perahia and Jesus. Though an obvious point, it bears noting that the *baraita* has been doctored in the BT by the addition of the second pair so as to serve as an appropriate introduction to the double narrative. The context of this *baraita* is Jethro's conversion (in the rabbinic imagination), to which the "bringing near" (*mekarev*) applies: God encourages Moses to convert Jethro rather than to respond with the typical distancing in order to test his sincerity. Clearly this is not the original context of the *baraita*, as "Based on this they said" means "said elsewhere," and the encounter between Elisha and Gehazi has nothing to do with conversion. Yet that larger story of Gehazi and Elisha and its original context in Tannaitic literature have been lost, and this recontextualized *baraita* alone remains.[32]

The heart of the BT composition in its present form derives from the combination of two independent sources akin to those preserved in two separate Yerushalmi passages. The Elisha-Gehazi narrative derives from a similar narrative found at ySanh 10:2, 29b, and the Joshua b. Perahia–Jesus narrative from the account of Yehuda b. Tabai and an anonymous disciple found at ySanh 6:8, 23c.

ySanh 10:2, 29b // ySanh 6:8, 23c[33]	bSot 47a (= bSanh 107b)
(ySanh 10:2, 29b)	[a] "Elisha"—what is the reference?
I. Gehazi was a man, mighty in Torah. However, he had three [negative] qualities. He was (A) jealous	

(*ayyin tsarah*), (B) licentious, and (C) did not believe in the resurrection of the dead.

(A) "Jealous." At the time when Elisha was sitting at his studies, Gehazi would sit at the doorway. The disciples would see him and say, "Gehazi could not enter! Shall we [be able] to enter?" Thus his [Elisha's] lesson was said, and no one benefited at all.[34] [Thus] when he [Gehazi] distanced himself (and sat at the door), what is written there? *The disciples of the prophets said to Elisha, "See the place where we live under your direction is too cramped for us" (2 Kgs 6:1)* (—meaning): "It could not contain the large number of students who were there."[35]

(B) "Licentious. . . ."

(C) "Did not believe in the resurrection of the dead. . . ."

II (A). You find that at the time when Naaman, commander of the army of the King of Aram came before Elisha . . . he wished to give him gold, silver, robes, garments, precious stones, and pearls, but he [Elisha] would not accept them. Thus it is written, *He pressed him to accept, but he [Elisha] refused (2 Kgs 5:16)*. Gehazi came and said, *I will run after him and get something (*me'uma*) from him (2 Kgs 5:20)*. It is written "blemish" (*muma*).[36]

[e3] And some say he **pushed away** (*dahah*) the sages from before Elisha. *As it is written, The disciples of the prophets said to Elisha, "See, the place where we live [under your direction is too cramped for us]" (2 Kgs 6:1)*. This implies that beforehand (before Gehazi's machinations) it was not too crowded.

(B) He went, and approached him [Naaman], and took what he took, and sequestered it in his upper-room [of the house].

[b1] *As is written, Naaman said, "Please take two talents." He urged him, and [he wrapped the two talents of silver in two bags and gave them, along with two changes of clothes, to two of his servants, who carried them ahead of him. When (Gehazi) arrived at the citadel], he took [(the things) from them and deposited them in the house] (2 Kgs 5:23–24).* And it is written, *[Then he (Elisha) said to Gehazi], "Did not my spirit go along when a man got down from his chariot to meet you. [Is this a time to take silver and to take/buy (*velaqahta*) clothing and olive groves and vineyards, sheep and oxen, and male and female slaves?]" (2 Kgs 5:25–26).*

(B) He came to Elisha. He said to him, *"Where (*ma'ayin*) and whither have you been, Gehazi (2 Kgs 5:25)* — **Have you prevented (*mi'anta*) the giving of reward to the righteous** (= to me, Elisha, by taking riches from Naaman)?"[37]

[b2] Did he take all this? He only took money and clothes!

[c1] R. Yitshaq said: At that time Elisha was expounding [the chapter] *Eight Creeping Things* [Tractate Shabbat 14]."

[c2] He [Elisha] said to him [Gehazi], **"Wicked one! Has the time come to take the reward [for studying the chapter] *Eight Creeping things?*"**

(C1) He [Gehazi] said to him, *"Your servant has not gone anywhere." Then [Elisha] said to him, "Did not my spirit go along when a man got down from his chariot to meet you? Is this a time to take money in order*

[c2] *Surely the leprosy of Naaman shall cling to you and to your descendants forever." And as [Gehazi] left his presence, he was snow-white with leprosy (2 Kgs 5:27).*

to take/buy silver and gold[38] *(2 Kgs 5:25–26)*. Is this a time to buy precious stones and pearls? Therefore *let the leprosy of Naaman cling to you (2 Kgs 5:27)*."

(C2) It is written, *There were four men, lepers, outside the gate (2 Kgs 7:3)*. Who were they? Rav Yehuda [said] in the name of Rav: "These were Gehazi and his three sons."

[c3] *There were four men, lepers, outside the gate (2 Kgs 7:3)*. R. Yohanan said, "This refers to Gehazi and his three sons."

(D1) *Elisha arrived in Damascus. And King Ben-hadad of Aram was ill (2 Kgs 8:7)*. What did he wish to go and do there? He wished to go and bring Gehazi near,

[f1] *Elisha arrived in Damascus (2 Kgs 8:7)*. Why did he go? R. Yohanan said, "He went in order to cause Gehazi to return and repent." But he did not repent. He [Elisha] said to him, "Repent."

(D2) but he found that he was a confirmed leper (*muhlat*; and could not be returned to society.)[39]

[f2] He [Gehazi] said to him, "Thus I have received a tradition from you: *'He who sins and leads the many to sin, they do not give him the opportunity to repent (= mAvot 5:18).'*"

(E) From here [we learn] that one pushes away (*dohin*) with the left hand and brings near with the right.

[1] Our masters taught: Always let the left [hand] **push away** (*dohah)* and the right [hand] bring near

(F) R. Yohanan said, *No sojourner spent the night in the open; I opened my doors to the road (Job 31:32)*: From here [we learn] that one pushes away with the left hand and brings near with the right hand. Not as did Elisha, who pushed away Gehazi with two hands.

[1] not like Elisha who rebuffed (*dahaf*) Gehazi with his two hands, and not like Joshua b. Perahia who rebuffed (*dehafo*) Jesus the Notsri [Christian] with his two hands.

(G) Elisha suffered from two sicknesses. One—natural, and one—[as punishment] because he pushed away Gehazi.

[o] Our masters taught: Elisha was sick with three sicknesses: (i) One, because he instigated the bears against the children (2 Kgs 2:23–25). (ii) And one, because he **rebuffed** Gehazi with his two hands. (iii) And one, from which he died, as it says, *Elisha had been stricken with the illness of which he was to die (2 Kgs 13:14)*.

[a] "Joshua b. Perahia"—what is the reference?

(H) (ySanh 6:8, 23c) Judah b. Tabai—the men of Jerusalem wished to appoint him Nasi. But he would not accept it. He fled and went to Alexandria. The men of Jerusalem wrote: "From Jerusalem the Great to Alexandria the Small! For how long will my betrothed dwell among you while I dwell bereft in my house?"[40]

[bb1] When Yannai the King was killing our rabbis <Shimon b. Shetah's sister hid him>, he [Joshua b. Perahia] fled to Alexandria in Egypt. When there was peace, Shimon b. Shetah sent to him [Joshua], "From me, Jerusalem the Holy City, to you, Alexandria, my sister! My husband lies in your midst, while I sit deserted." He [Joshua] thought, "This means there is peace."

(J) He [Judah] departed, going along a street.[41] He said, "The mistress of the house (= inn) who received us beautifully (*ya'ut*) and was gracious (*hasida*) is to be remembered [for good]." One of his students said to him, "One of her eyes bulged."[42] He [Judah] said to him, "There are two [sins] in you: one, that you looked at her, and the other, that you suspected that I looked at her. Did I say she was

[cc1] While he [Joshua] was coming [back], he arrived at a certain inn. They treated him with great honor. He said, "How fine (*na'eh*) is this *aksania* [inn]!" He [Jesus] said to him, "Master, her [the innkeeper's] eyes are slanted."

beautiful (*ya'eh*) in her appearance? I meant only that she was beautiful (*ya'eh*) in her service."

(K) He became angry at him [the student]

[cc2] He [Joshua] said to him, "Wicked one! Are you occupied with that?" He sounded 400 shofar [blasts] and banned him.

(L) and he [the student] died (or "departed"[43]).

[dd1] He [Jesus] came before him [Joshua] many times, but he did not take him back.

[dd2] One day while he [Joshua] was reciting the Shema, he [Jesus] came before him. He [Joshua] intended to take him back, [and] he gestured with his hand (to wait until he could finish the prayer). He [Jesus] thought that he was **pushing him away (*dahi leih*).**

[ee1] He [Jesus] went and set up a brick and worshipped it.

[ff1] He [Joshua] said to him, "Repent!"

[ff2] He [Jesus] said to him, "Thus I have received a tradition from you: *'He who sins and leads the many to sin, they do not give him the opportunity to repent' (= mAvot 5:18.)*"

[ee2] And there is a tradition: "Jesus the Notsri, because he engaged in sorcery and enticed and turned Israel to idolatry . . . ."

While the PT sources are fascinating in their own right and deserve independent treatment, here my interest is the nature of the BT reworking and what it tells us about BT compositional technique.

The PT story of Gehazi is composed of two sources: the first, a character sketch of sorts, delineates Gehazi's three flaws (I; abbreviated here). The second, an exegetical narrative, describes Gehazi's encounter with Naaman and Elisha's rebuke (II) and closely parallels our BT account.[44] Note, however, that the Bavli draws on the first PT source for the tradition that Gehazi caused the disciples to abandon Elisha's school (1A = e3), recontextualizing it within the exegetical narrative and recasting it as (one of three opinions concerning) Gehazi's reaction to his rebuff, rather than as an independent testimony to Gehazi's poor character as in the PT. This move suggests that the Bavli storytellers had access to the PT passage in essentially its current form, namely with the two sources combined or juxtaposed (I, II), and they drew on the former to expand and rework the latter. This in turn confirms that those storytellers were Stammaim, not Amoraim, as this type of reworking of sources—the transfer and reuse of a tradition in a new context—characterizes Stammaitic activity. That the BT storytellers seem to have known the PT passage in a stage of redaction when the two sources were combined also points to the Stammaim. They may have known the PT in its redacted, or almost redacted form, whereas Amoraim would have known traditions circulating independently.

Despite the similarities between the PT and BT versions of the Elisha-Gehazi account, there are significant and instructive differences.[45] First, we should note that the order of the material differs. The Bavli introduces the story with the *baraita* that articulates the lesson about rebuffing/pushing away too strongly (1), whereas the PT concludes the story with it (E).[46] This shift results in part from the BT's integration of the Joshua b. Perahia–Jesus story in the same unit and employing the opening statement to introduce and underscore the common element. The Bavli, in other words, makes this lesson the main point of the composition and exemplifies it with two accounts, whereas for the PT this lesson is but one of a number of points that emerge from the series of Elisha-Gehazi traditions. As noted above, the BT even adds the names Joshua b. Perahia and Jesus into the *baraita*; the PT preserves it in much the same form as in the Tannaitic sources.

A second important difference between the BT and PT is that the exegetical narrative unfolds in slightly different order. The BT cites the problematic verse, 2 Kgs 5:26, earlier (b1 in the BT vs. C1 in the PT) and explicitly poses the exegetical question ("Did he take all this?"). The PT proceeds by citing and glossing the biblical verses sequentially and not articulating any

exegetical difficulty. This variation gives the Bavli a more dialogical quality, a characteristic of the Stammaitic stratum in particular.

Several differences in content accompany these variations in the order. Most important is the nature of the payment or reward on account of which Elisha rebukes Gehazi. Compensation for curing leprosy in the Bible becomes a more general "reward for the righteous" in the PT. Exegetical grounding for this change devolves from the reading of *ma'ayin* ("where") as *mi'anta* ("prevent")—preventing the (future) reward for the righteous (2 Kgs 5:25 [B]). In other words, by accepting gifts from Naaman, Gehazi has collected the reward that Elisha otherwise would have enjoyed for his general righteous acts. The BT transforms this idea into reward for the study of Torah, not generic righteousness, and, more specifically, reward for the study of a certain tractate (b2–c)! The exegetical grounding shifts from 2 Kgs 5:25 to the eight items listed in 2 Kgs 5:26, as delineated above. Related to this shift is the BT's emphasis on the appropriate time for the reward. In the BT Elisha stresses that it is not "the time" for collecting reward now, in this world, but rather in the world to come. For the PT the issue is that Gehazi has taken Elisha's rightful reward, such that Elisha will not receive it, whether in this world or the next.

Another significant difference is the repercussions of the excessive rebuff of Gehazi. In the PT Elisha's curse renders Gehazi a "confirmed" or permanent leper (*muhlat*), who apparently can no longer be cured and must be ostracized forever (D2). Nor is it clear that he solicits Gehazi to *repent* or simply to return to his retinue and service after the distancing due to leprosy. The Aramaic *maqreva*, "bring near, close," does not really mean to "bring to repentance" though it occasionally seems to be used with that sense.[47] In the BT, by contrast, Elisha explicitly exhorts Gehazi "to return and repent" (*hazar*) (f1), but Gehazi replies that he cannot do so (f2) because of the sins he committed in the interim—these sins are not paralleled in the PT and constitute a unique Bavli development (e1–e2, and e3 appears in the previous PT tradition, not in the exegetical narrative, as detailed above). For the BT, Gehazi's moral condition, the state of his soul, has deteriorated beyond repair; for the PT, it is the state of his skin. In the spirit of the BT storytellers and their penchant for paronomasia, we might say that the BT is most concerned with sin, the PT with skin; the BT with heresy, the PT with leprosy.

These BT changes and additions "rabbinize" the story to a greater degree. To be sure, the PT presents Elisha and Gehazi as master and disciple, and the depiction of Gehazi as "mighty in Torah" (I) and running a study-house (A) represent a degree of rabbinization.[48] The BT continues

in this trend by portraying Gehazi studying a rabbinic text, a chapter of Mishna or Talmud, and portraying the breakdown of their relationship in terms of a drama of sin, repentance, and heresy. As opposed to the PT, where the consequences of Elisha's fallout with Gehazi are confined to Gehazi's body, in the BT the estrangement of the rabbinic master and disciple proves disastrous, as the disciple in turn replaces Torah with heresy and teaching Torah with leading others to sin. Thus, the same moral about rebuffing gently rather than harshly, expressed in almost identical words (E–F vs. a), means something rather different in the two Talmuds. The BT refracts the idea through a more rabbinic lens, providing an extremely cautionary moral to rabbis about the theological and social dangers that may result from the deterioration of their relationship with disciples. We might say that a spurned disciple in the BT retains his vocation, remaining a disciple but of necessity turning to the "dark side" and engaging in heresy rather than Torah study. In the PT the rejection of the disciple is unfortunate, but the repercussions are limited.

Awareness of this rabbinization process also helps us explain the BT's choice of sins imputed to Gehazi, which are added to the PT account (e1–e2). The association with Jerobaom's bulls seems very strange in that according to biblical chronology Gehazi and Elisha postdated King Jeroboam by several generations, and there is no overt textual association between them. The source for Gehazi's entanglement in that affair, however, is mAvot 5:18, part of which Gehazi quotes to Elisha to explain why he cannot repent (f2); here, incidentally, we have another example of the BT's rabbinization in the citation of a rabbinic teaching. The full Mishna reads:

> He who leads the many to acquire merit, no sin comes on his account. But he who leads the many to sin, they do not give him the opportunity to repent. Moses acquired merit and made the many acquire merit, hence the merit of the many was attributed to him, as it says, *He did what is righteous for the Lord, and what is lawful with Israel (Deut 33:21)*. Jeroboam sinned and led the many to sin, so the sin of the many is attributed to him, as it says, *Because of the sins that Jeroboam committed and led Israel to commit (1 Kgs 14:16)*.

The Mishna cites Jeroboam as the paradigm of the sinner who committed sins for which repentance is impossible—the kinds of sin Gehazi confesses to have committed. On this basis the storyteller implicates Gehazi in Jeroboam's most heinous sin, the erection of the idolatrous calves. He embellishes the biblical account by adding that Gehazi magically made it appear that the calves were animate in order to trick the people into believing in

their divinity. There are no earlier attestations of the particular descriptions of his sins, the suspended stone and speaking idols, so we cannot trace the history of these traditions. The storytellers either drew on sources to which they had access or composed them themselves. At all events, this Mishna clearly accounts for the baffling association of Gehazi with Jerobaom. We have in this story an instructive example of how the BT reworks and embellishes earlier accounts by drawing on other rabbinic sources and then extrapolating additional narrative elements on that basis.

Let us now turn to comparison of the second passage, ySanh 6:6, 23c. The first half of the BT hews fairly closely to the basic plot of the PT, including the flight to Alexandria, request to return (with figurative language similar to that of the PT), sojourn at an inn,[49] misunderstanding, and rebuke of the disciple. The main difference, of course, is that the anonymous disciple has been identified as Jesus and his master as Joshua b. Perahia rather than Judah b. Tabai.[50] The identification of the disciple as Jesus appears to be a function of the juxtaposition with the Gehazi story. We find these two characters linked in the following tradition from bBer 17a–b:

> When the rabbis would depart from the school of Rav Hisda—and some say from the school of Rav Shmuel bar Nahmani—they would say . . . "What is *There is no breaching (Ps 144:14)*? That our company should not be like the company of Saul, from which Doeg came. *And no sortie (Ps 144:14)*. That our company not be like the company of David from which Ahitofel came. *And no wailing (Ps 144:14)*. That our company not be like the company of Elisha from which Gehazi came. *In our streets (Ps 144:14)*. That there not be among us a son or disciple who 'burns his dish in public'[51] like Jesus the Notsri."[52]

The parting homily interprets successive phrases of Ps 144:14 to refer to outstanding sinful sages of the rabbinic imagination, the three denied a share in the world to come by mSanh 10:1, and then Jesus.[53] Our storytellers thus found a ready association between Gehazi and Jesus.[54] This may have influenced them to identify the anonymous disciple of the PT story with Jesus as part of the process of juxtaposing the two PT traditions to create the double narrative of the BT. As the structure outlined above suggests, and as we will discuss below, they used several other parts of the Gehazi account to revise the anonymous-disciple anecdote of the PT.[55]

The change from Judah b. Tabbai in the PT to Joshua b. Perahia cannot be explained with any certainty. It has been suggested that, in the view of the BT (or of some earlier tradents of the source), Judah b. Tabbai never served as Nasi, and so he was replaced by Joshua b. Perahia at some point.

In mHag 2:2, Judah b. Tabbai and Shimon b. Shetah are listed as the third of the early "pairs," designating Judah the Nasi and Shimon the Head of the Court. However, R. Yehuda asserts the reverse in tHag 2:8. Indeed, the PT adduces the story to resolve this very question, as support for the opinion that Judah b. Tabbai served as Nasi. But I find no explicit engagement with this issue in the BT. It has also been suggested that tMakh 3:4, in which Joshua b. Perahia transmits a tradition about Alexandrian wheat, is somehow implicated in this shift,[56] but this also appears to be too minor a factor to cause such a change.[57] In fact, given the Bavli penchent for paronomasia, my best guess is that the change has something to do with the affinity between the names "Yehoshua" (Joshua) and "Yeshu" (Jesus), as Joseph Klausner conjectured almost a century ago.[58] Having identified the disciple with Jesus due to the association with Gehazi, the storytellers perhaps switched the master to Yehoshua to produce the paronomasia or for a mnemonic aid.

Besides the change in characters, the BT alters the reason for the flight, from reluctance to be appointed Nasi to the persecution of rabbis by King Yannai. We might conjecture that this change results from a different perspective on rabbinic power—the Bavli's surprise that a sage would turn down a position of leadership, especially in light of other BT narratives of intense rabbinic competition for leading positions, such as that between Rabban Gamaliel and his opponents discussed in Chapter 5.[59] And the narrative of persecution followed by cessation of hostility provides a better motivation for the sage's return. Why Judah b. Tabai consents to return in the PT is not completely clear, unless we are to assume that the appointment of another sage in the interim has put his mind at ease.

Yet, there may be an entirely different motivation for this reworking: Herford noted that the flight to Alexandria offers a most suggestive parallel to the flight to Egypt in Matthew 2:13–18.[60] Here Jesus accompanies his master to Alexandria to avoid the king (Yannai) who is "killing" the sages; there Jesus is taken by his father to Egypt to avoid the king (Herod) who is killing babies. Recent research has demonstrated that the Bavli storytellers were intimately familiar with passages of the Christian Scriptures and important trends of Christian exegesis, so there is every reason to assume this Matthean passage was known to them.[61] If so, then the identification of the disciple with Jesus may have played a role in the change of the reason for the flight to avoiding royal persecution.[62] We should also note that mention of the evil King Yannai creates a loose parallel to the mention of the wicked King Jeroboam at the end of the Gehazi story, thereby provid-

ing another point of contact—besides the structural and lingusitic parallels detailed above—between the two narratives.

That the story attributes the persecution to King Yannai (rather than Herod or another king) is probably due to the BT redactors' penchant for integrating other sources. A story found in bBer 48a relates that King Yannai killed the rabbis and therefore did not have anyone to recite a blessing for him, and subsequently his wife brought forth her brother,[63] Shimon b. Shetah, to bless his cup. The story implies that the wife/sister hid her brother Shimon during the persecution, as she produces him for Yannai after exacting a promise from her husband not to harm the rabbi.[64] Our story draws on this account to explain Joshua's flight to Alexandria and return, and some manuscripts of both Sotah and Sanhedrin include a further reference in the somewhat gratuitous line "Shimon b. Shetah's sister hid him" which I set in the angular brackets.[65] I say "somewhat gratuitous" as the line, though irrelevant to the Joshua b. Perahia and Jesus affair, explains why Shimon was able to remain in Jerusalem despite the persecution and could subsequently summon Joshua to return. Note that replacing the anonymous "men of Jerusalem" with Shimon b. Shetah parallels replacing the anonymous disciple with Jesus and may point to both a BT tendency and additional motivation for the reworking, namely, the desire to identify anonymous figures in their sources with known characters.[66] Even if the conjecture of the Matthean intertext is rejected, I believe it is the story of Yannai and the general BT tendency to borrow from other passages that is responsible for the transformation of this section.

This type of borrowing (with or without the line detailing the hiding of Shimon b. Shetah) again points to the Stammaim, as the borrowers drew on a discrete and independent BT passage to rework the PT tradition. Moreover, there are two additional possible points of contact with this Yannai tradition. First, in bBer 48a, Yannai remarks to Shimon b. Shetah, "See what honor I have shown you," a comment similar to Joshua b. Perahia's remark that the innkeeper "treated him with great honor,"[67] whereas the PT speaks not of honor but of the fine service and grace (cc1 vs. J)." And another Bavli tradition about King Yannai tells of his mutilation of Issachar b. Barkai the High Priest, as follows: "He (Issachar) *gestured with his hand* (*ahvei beyadei*). The king (= Yannai) said to them: 'Since he *gestured with his hand*, cut off his right hand.'"[68] This locution parallels the description of Joshua b. Perahia's gesture in our narrative (d2). I am generally reluctant to place too much weight on the common use of isolated phrases that could simply be routine use of language, and below we will see that another pas-

sage about the Shema itself may be responsible. But the phrase "he gestured with his hand" is rare,[69] and its appearance in a tradition about the same King Yannai who features in another source from which the BT storytellers clearly borrowed may be too much of a coincidence. If this is the case, we have an impressive example of how the Stammaim integrated several interrelated traditions to rework an earlier PT source.

The second half of the Joshua b. Perahia–Jesus saga is a unique BT development beyond the boundaries of the PT passage, which abruptly concludes with the death (or departure) of the disciple. The storytellers drew on at least five Bavli passages for components of the narrative. First, in replacing death with the ban, physical death with ostracism and social death (cc2), they borrowed from bMQ 16a (= bShevu 36a): "Barak banned Meroz with 400 shofars."[70] The use of the shofar in the ceremony of the ban appears only in Bavli sources and never in the PT, providing incontrovertible evidence of the Babylonian provenance of this part of the narrative.[71] Second, R. Joshua b. Perahia's gesture with the hand (*ahvei leih beyadei*) probably borrows from a *baraita* found in bYom 19b which warns that one "not gesture with his fingers" (*mareh be'etsba'otav*)[72] while reciting the Shema (limited to the first paragraph of the Shema in the subsequent discussion). The storytellers seems to have substituted "hand" for "fingers" (and translated the Hebrew into Aramaic) in keeping with our story's repeated mention of hands. Third, the phrasing of Jesus's misunderstanding of his master's gesture of acceptance, "he thought that he was pushing him away" (dd2), borrows from a formula found in several halakhic discussions. In these accounts, a disciple mistakenly believes that his master has fobbed off his question with a spurious answer, only to find that the response was both serious and accurate (bYev 105a, bAZ 10a, bHag 19a).[73] This is a beautiful example of the interconnections between law and narrative, as the redactors employed a phrase used in halakhic contexts for their story, which literalizes the figure to some extent. The halakhic sense of "he thought that he was dismissing him (*dahi leih*)," that is, dismissing his question with a specious verbal excuse, becomes Jesus believing that his master "pushes him away (*dahi leih*)," that is, rejects him with a bodily movement. Fourth, the depiction of Jesus worshipping a brick (ee1) borrows from a tradition ascribed to Shmuel at bAZ 46a: "Rav Yehuda said that Shmuel said: A Jew who set up a brick in order to worship it . . . ."[74] Fifth, the postscript about Jesus practicing sorcery and enticing others (ee2) borrows from bSanh 43a: "On the eve of Passover they hanged Jesus the Notsri. A herald went out forty days beforehand [proclaiming]: 'Jesus the Notsri goes forth to

be stoned because he engaged in sorcery and enticed and turned Israel to idolatry."[75] This is the full version of the (pseudo-?) *baraita* and clearly the original source of the tradition, as the proclamation of Jesus's misdeeds recounted in our story is an excerpt from that account of his trial and death. The storytellers borrowed this line mentioning the charges against Jesus for their purposes here. For this reason the syntax is awkward: "Jesus the Notsri, **because** he engaged in sorcery and enticed and turned Israel to idolatry," though it flows smoothly in bSanh 43a. That the source appears here as a postscript and out of narrative order also suggests that it has been borrowed from elsewhere and appended to the narrative.[76]

Finally, several components of the Joshua-Jesus account derive from the preceding BT version of the Elisha-Gehazi story with which it is juxtaposed.[77] The parallels in structure and content between the two stories suggest that one influenced the other, and the earlier version of the Elisha-Gehazi account in the PT indicates its priority. Thus, the overarching rubric of avoiding too harsh a rebuff that underpins the second half of the Joshua-Jesus narrative (the half without parallel in ySanh 6:8, 23c) originates in the PT version of the Elisha-Gehazi account and presumably was borrowed from the BT reworking of that source. Note, moreover, the almost verbatim repetition in sections f1–f2/ff1–ff2, the efforts to reconcile with the disciple. This element of the Elisha-Gehazi saga also originates in the PT (D1), suggesting again that the composer of the Joshua-Jesus account borrowed it from the BT Elisha-Gehazi story.

Thus, the storytellers composed the Joshua-Jesus story by combining (1) the basic narrative of the PT account of the anonymous disciple (bb–cc1) with (2) parallels to the proximate Gehazi story (aa, dd1, ff1–ff2) and (3) adapting other BT passages (bb, cc2, dd2, ee2), as illustrated by the following table, based on the structure presented above.

(aa) "Joshua b. Perahia"—what is the reference?	BT Gehazi story (a)
(bb) Exposition: Joshua and Jesus flee	ySanh 6:6, 23c, bBer 48a (Yannai)
(cc1) Jesus's sin: looks at woman	ySanh 6:6, 23c
(cc2) Joshua rebuffs Jesus with the ban	bMQ 16a (= bShevu 36a)

(dd1) Jesus approaches and is rebuffed	
(dd2) Jesus approaches Joshua with Shema; gesture with the hand and misunderstanding	bYom 19b (gesture)[78] // bYev 105a etc. (misunderstanding)
(ee1) Jesus sins: worships brick	bAZ 46a
(ff1) Joshua asks Jesus to repent	BT Gehazi story (f1)
(ff2) Jesus explains that he cannot repent; mAvot 5:18	BT Gehazi story (f2)
(ee2) Jesus's sins: leading others astray	bSanh 43a

We can therefore account for almost every component of Bavli reworking of this narrative. This is another outstanding example of the compositional techniques of the redactors and our ability to document their moves by means of source- and form-criticism.

Redactional Context

This passage appears almost verbatim, though in slightly different order, in bSanh 107b and bSot 47a. Is it possible to determine the original context?[79] And what is at stake in this question?

In bSot 47a the passage appears in the section of Talmud that comments on mSot 9:5–9:6, which deals with the ritual of the "beheaded heifer" (*eglah arufa*, Deut 21:1–9). In mSot 9:6 the liturgy pronounced by the town elders, "Our hands did not shed this blood (Deut 21:7)," is interpreted in terms of failure to provide food and an escort. The elders need not disavow bloodshed (as none would presume them guilty of such a crime), but they acknowledge responsibility for not escorting the victim as he departed from their town, thereby leaving him exposed to the brigands that murdered him. As commentary to this part of the Mishna, the BT cites a number of traditions about the importance of providing an escort, including midrashim, rabbinic dicta, and a few anecdotes of sages escorting their colleagues (bSot 46b–47a). These traditions culminate in a reference to Elisha: "If the men of Jericho had escorted Elisha, he would not have incited the

bears against the children" (2 Kgs 2:23–24). After some further exegesis of this episode, the Bavli cites the *baraita* about Elisha's three sicknesses, with one as punishment for rebuffing Gehazi which immediately precedes the stories (section 0). Our passage follows and provides the full account of the rebuff. Thus, the immediate context of the passage in bSotah is a series of Elisha traditions in general and the mention of Elisha's punishment for rebuffing Gehazi with two hands in particular. As such, its redaction here would appear not to be related at all to the proximate Mishna but rather to result from the association with traditions cited in the course of the Talmudic discussion.

Nevertheless, there appears an interesting connection between the stories and the Mishna in the mention of hands, which appears both in the Mishna's citation of Deut 21:6–7 ("The elders of the town nearest to the corpse shall wash their *hands* . . . . Our *hands* did not shed his blood.") and in its exegesis of the verse: "He did not come to our *hands* (*al yadeinu*) and we dismissed him without food."[80] Both the *baraita* preceding the stories (0) and the introductory line (1) mention the rebuff with two *hands*, and the *baraita* following the story (2) mentions the left and right (hands), although "hand" (*yad*) itself does not appear there. And as we have noted, the episode added in the second story involves a gesture with the hand. While this link to the Mishna is primarily verbal and not based on content, there may be a distant substantive connection, too. Although a rebuff certainly differs from the lack of an escort, both the elders in the Mishna and Elisha/Joshua dismiss individuals from their presence in an inappropriate fashion—the former with apathy, the latter with hostility. In both cases, those individuals come to harm: the victim in the Mishna suffers bodily harm; the "victims" in the stories suffer harm to their souls, abandoning Torah and becoming heretics. The former loses his life in this world; the latter lose their share in the world to come.[81] In both the Mishna and the stories, the elders/sages bear responsibility. The extended series of traditions about the importance of an escort that lead up to the Elisha traditions therefore provide a type of thematic bridge to the Elisha traditions and the stories. Consequently, the redactional setting of our passage, though at first glance a function of a haphazard chain of associations, also exhibits verbal and substantive connections to the proximate Mishna.[82]

The context in bSanh 107b is the Talmudic commentary to mSanh 10:2, which lists Gehazi among the four commoners who have no share in the world to come. Our passage is brought directly on the Mishna to explain what Gehazi did. The Talmud here introduces the passage simply with the word *dikhtiv*, "As it is written," and continues with the sections of the

story that detail Gehazi's refusal to repent and his sins, f1–f2, e1–e2. Only then does the Talmud cite the "opening" line that ostensibly introduces the passage by stating the theme (1). Thus, the order in bSanhedrin in terms of the sections presented above in bSotah is: f1–f2, e–e3, 1, a, b1–b2, c–c2.[83] The Talmudic passage concludes with the other two *baraitot*, first that of rebuffing the inclination, a woman, and a child (2), and then that of Elisha's three sicknesses (0), the *baraita* which precedes the stories in bSot 47a! (For these reasons I have based the literary analysis on the text found in bSotah rather than bSanhedrin.)

Because of this unnatural sequence in bSanhedrin, one might conclude that the passage is original to bSotah, from which it was transferred to bSanhedrin, and that the natural order was rearranged to serve the purpose of its recontextualization, namely, to explain the Mishna's declaration of Gehazi's exclusion from the world to come. To claim the reverse, that the current form of the passage in bSanhedrin is original—despite the introductory line's being displaced to the middle (1)—and that the order was improved after the transfer to bSotah, seems desperate. Moreover, one of the minor textual variants supports this hypothesis.[84] In bSanhedrin, all manuscripts but one read "Gehazi—what is the reference?" in place of "Elisha—what is the reference," which is found in all manuscripts of bSotah save one (a).[85] Now, the latter reading is certainly original, as the composition opens with the warning not to act like Elisha or Joshua b. Perahia and should therefore continue with these two. And all manuscripts of both tractates introduce the second story with "Joshua b. Perahia—what is the reference?" which is parallel to reading "Elisha" in the first. The redactors[86] of bSanhedrin changed the reading to "Gehazi" to relate the story more directly to mSanh 10:2 and its mention of Gehazi, which indicates that the version of bSotah is primary.

Several considerations, however, argue in favor of bSanhedrin as the more original location. First among these is the parallel to the Elisha-Gehazi saga in the same location in ySanh 10:2, 29b (and not in ySotah or elsewhere in the PT), which suggests that the material originated in connection with mSanh 10:2. Second, the connection to the Mishnha is much more direct in bSanhedrin, despite the associations with mSot 9:6 noted above. The primary function of Talmud is Mishna-exegesis, and in bSanhedrin the passage—or at least several sections of it—does explain Mishna. In bSot 47a the passage does not really serve as Mishna-exegesis; the associations and connections to mSot 9:6 explain why the passage was redacted with that Mishna, but they do not explicate the Mishna itself.

The considerations on both sides suggest to me that neither answer is

fully satisfactory, which in turn implies that the question has been posed too crudely. This case demands a more dynamic and complex conceptualization of the redactional context. The passage seems to have been composed (or reworked) and circulated independently of any redactional context.[87] Indeed, although the passage in bSanhedrin serves to explicate the Mishna, that is hardly its primary message. In fact the Elisha material in ySanh 10:2 bears more directly on the Mishna, as it begins by delineating Gehazi's three flaws and then introduces the Elisha-Gehazi affair, which contributes to the negative image of Gehazi such that we understand why he appears in the sordid Mishnaic list of those without share in the next world. The criticism of Elisha appears in the PT as a postscript, almost an afterthought, a secondary lesson that emerges in retrospect from the affair.[88] The BT, by contrast, puts Elisha's responsibility in the foreground as the central theme, states it explicitly at the outset, and turns Gehazi's sins into the terrible effects of the rebuff, but not the focus of the story. In bSanhedrin the passage is reordered into the convoluted sequence so as to make it function more directly as Mishna-exegesis, almost against its grain, so to speak. It stands to reason that material originating in connection with mSanh 10:2, 29b, as evidenced by the PT, was reworked and circulated in Babylonia as an autonomous composition, a lesson to rabbinic masters about harsh treatment of their students. This composition was redacted in bSotah for the reasons detailed above in its natural order, and redacted in bSanhedrin somewhat out-of-order, to cast it more as exegesis of mSanh 10:2.

The addition of the Joshua-Jesus narrative supports this scenario, as the story functions entirely as a second illustration of the rebuff theme. The BT storytellers reworked a different PT passage for this purpose, and not to help explicate either Mishna. While it may be argued that the BT construes Jesus as a villain and heretic like those of mSanh 10:2 and that he also lost his share in the world to come, the fact remains that Jesus is not mentioned in the Mishna, hence the story cannot be considered Mishna-exegesis.

At stake in this inquiry is our understanding of the redactional process of the BT as a whole and of the relationship between legal and narrative materials. In both bSotah and bSanhedrin we see evidence of thoughtful and deliberate integration of stories, albeit in different ways. In bSanhedrin the redactors inserted stories to explicate the proximate Mishna and altered their internal sequence, though not substance, to achieve that purpose. The redactors of bSotah, on the other hand, inserted the stories not to explicate the Mishna but to complement it, to promote values and concepts related to those that inhere in the Mishnaic law. It would behoove us, therefore, to consider the seemingly meandering traditions that precede stories as

thoughtful compositions and deliberate segues, designed to integrate stories that enhance Mishnaic ideas.

Parallel Christian Tales and Cultural Context

In his article, "The Stern Master and the Wayward Disciple: A 'Jesus' Story in the Talmud and in Christian Hagiography," Stephen Gero points out that this story, in both its form in the PT and its reworked form in the BT, resembles an ancient Christian tale extant in two primary versions.[89] One version appears in *The Epic Histories Attributed to P'awstos Buzand*, an Armenian text dated to about 470 CE by Nina G. Garsoïan, whose translation is provided below. The second version appears in *The Lives of the Monks of Palestine* by Cyril of Scythopolis, written in the first half of the sixth century CE (Cyril died in 558 CE).

> And so, St Epip'an[90] left many righteous regulations in these districts but he himself went forth to the land of the Greeks, taking some five hundred of his disciples who were hermits, dwellers-on-mountains, dwellers-in-the-desert. And as they were going, there chanced a woman on the way. And as they passed by the woman, Epip'an began to try them and said: "How fair and attractive that woman was." And a youngster among his disciples replied: "The woman whom you have praised was one-eyed." And St. Epip'an said: "Why, indeed, did you look to see her face? Did you look because you have evil thoughts?" And he immediately separated the youth from himself and drove him away. (*The Epic Histories Attributed to P'awstos Buzand* trans. Nina G. Garsoïan [Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989], Book V, sec. 27, p. 207.)

> Once when journeying with a disciple from Jericho to the Jordan, this champion of piety Sabas[91] fell in with some people of the world among whom was a girl of winning appearance. When they had passed by, the elder, wishing to test the disciple, asked, "What about (or: 'How beautiful'[92]) the girl who has gone and is one-eyed." The other insisted that he knew with precision that she was not one-eyed but had indeed extremely fine eyes. The elder asked, "How do you know that so clearly?" He replied, "I, father, had a careful look, and I noted that she has both her eyes." At this the elder said, "And where have you stored the precept that says, 'Do not fix your eye on her and do not be captured by her eyebrows?' (Prov 9:18a [LXX], 6:25). Fiery is the passion that arises from inquisitive looks. Know this: from now on you are not to stay with me in a cell because you do not guard your eyes as you should." He sent him to Castellium and, when he had spent

> sufficient time there and learnt to keep a careful watch on his eyes and thoughts, he received him as an anchorite into the laura. (Cyril of Scythopolis, *The Lives of the Monks of Palestine,* trans. R. M. Price [Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, 1991], Life of Sabas #47, p. 147.)

The similarities between the Christian and Jewish versions, in particular the deformity pertaining to the woman's eye(s), indicate that we are dealing with a common tradition, a stock plot-pattern of sorts that seems to have circulated broadly. Whether the Christian versions antedate and influenced the Talmudic versions, as Gero suggests,[93] or *vice versa*, is difficult to determine, and not as interesting as the question of the differences among the versions and their significance. Gero does not offer much comparative analysis, as his main point is to dispel again the search for a historical kernel of the Bavli's Jesus story, and secondarily to make some claims about when and how the disciple was identified with Jesus.[94] However, he does offer two instructive observations. First, in contrast to the sober ending of the *Epic Histories,* which Gero believes reflects the more original version, where the disciple fails the trial and is summarily dismissed, Cyril offers an "improved," more optimistic conclusion. Here the disciple repents and reforms his character such that the master "receives" (*edexato*)[95] him again. We should add to this observation that the Talmudic versions exhibit a similar development: in the PT the disciple dies or departs, while the BT entertains the possibility of repentance and has the disciple attempt to be "received" (*qablani*). However, I would not focus on the question of priority but rather emphasize the different thematic choices and their didactic impact.[96] The versions of *The Epic Histories* and the PT are far less tolerant of weakness and failure and seem to have a pessimistic view of personal growth and change. Showing himself to be sinful, a disciple reveals his true character and inherent unworthiness, and consequently has no hope of becoming a rabbi or monk. Cyril and the BT offer a different perspective, perhaps envisioning a disciple's path as a lengthy and checkered journey of steps forward and backward, of successes and failures. Sins function as learning experiences which, after proper remorse and repentance, may ultimately contribute to the formation of a more virtuous character (although this fails to occur in the BT, due to the master's overreaction).[97]

Second, Gero notes that the Christian versions portray the master as beyond reproach, whereas the PT storyteller has Judah b. Tabbai "defend himself at some length against imputations of inappropriate conduct" in clarifying that he meant "beautiful" with respect to the woman's service.[98]

I am not sure that this statement functions as a defense as much as a necessary explanation for the disciple—and audience—of the source of the confusion.[99] (Indeed, the narrator's disclosure in the Christian tales that the master wished to "try" or "test" his disciple functions in identical fashion to the "defense" in the PT, namely to exonerate the master from implication in the same sin.) The more salient point here, in my opinion, is that both Christian versions present the master as deliberately testing the disciple, whereas both Talmudic versions attribute the disciple's fall to the ambiguous utterance and misunderstanding. My impression is that stories of such deliberate moral trials of disciples (as opposed to intellectual trials) are rare in the Talmuds.[100] While this point deserves further study, we may have here a reflection of the different conceptions of master-disciple relationships in the two traditions and of the appropriate means to determine qualifications for disciplehood.

Yet, the portrayal of the conduct of the master indeed presents an important difference, not so much with respect to the PT as Gero suggests, but to the BT. The BT alone places blame and responsibility on the master, not the disciple. The three other versions offer no criticism of the master, nor any sense that he failed in his role. In contrast the BT does not shrink from delineating the moral failures of the rabbinic sage—even of the great Joshua b. Perahia—and criticizing him for the disciple's demise. While the BT's lesson concerns the rebuff and the gentleness with which reprimands should be expressed, those of the other three versions relate to lewd thoughts and lustful glances. The Bavli directs its message to masters, the other three versions to disciples. Elsewhere I have observed that such criticism and negative portrayals of sages and rabbis, a form of self-criticism, though found occasionally in Palestinian sources, is far more prominent in the Bavli, probably a function of its protracted and intensive redaction within a scholastic academy.[101] The Christian versions help us appreciate the distinctiveness of the BT in this regard, and illuminate how each storyteller transformed the anecdote for his own purposes.

Beyond the insights that emerge from comparative study, the Christian accounts illuminate more clearly the general cultural context of our text. The twin stories of Elisha/Gehazi and Joshua/Jesus belong to the type of story that centers on master-disciple relationships, as discussed in the previous chapter.[102] Yet, in contrast to these stories, which warn disciples against various types of disrespect, the focus of our stories is the master's conduct. Whatever we think of the shortcomings of Gehazi and Jesus, the storyteller places blame for their going astray squarely on the masters' shoulders.

APPENDIX: MANUSCRIPT VARIANTS

I have only provided major variants here, as complete collation of variants can be found in *Diqduqei soferim hashalem: The Babylonian Talmud with Variant Readings: Tractate Sotah*, ed. Abraham Liss (Jerusalem: Yad Harav Herzog: Institute for the Complete Israeli Talmud, 1979). Manuscript sigla follow Sokoloff, *DJBA*, 57. Oxford, heb. d.20 (2675,2) = O^8. Oxford marginal glosses (see Liss, 21) = G. Vatican 110 = V^2. First printed edition = P. The text of the Jesus story is omitted or abbreviated to various degrees in the printings due to the censor.

(a): "Elisha." O^8 reads "Of Gehazi."

(c1): "That hour . . . busy with." O^8 reads "That day . . . sitting and expounding."

(c2): "Gehazi stood before him." O^8 adds "He [Gehazi] came and stood before him."

(d): "Went to (*vayelekh*)." V^2 and the biblical text (2 Kgs 8:6) read "Came (*vayavo*)."

(f1): "R. Yohanan said." O^8 omits.

(f1): "But he did not repent." O^8 omits.

(e2): "mouth." O^8 reads "lip."

(bb1): "Shimon b. Shetah's sister hid him." Not found in M, V^2. The line appears in ms O^8 and several other text witnesses. See Liss, p. 301, apparatus to lines 30–31.

(cc1): "They treated him with honor." So V^2. P reads "They stood before him with fine honor. They did him great honor." O^8 reads "They did him honor." G reads "They stood before him with fine honor."

(cc1): "He said, 'How fine . . . .'" P and O^8 add "He sat and praised. 'How fine . . . .'"

(dd1): "many times." V^2 and P read "every day." O^8 reads "several times."

(dd2): "One day he was reciting the Shema. He came to him." O^8 reads "He [Jesus] came to him another time, while he [Joshua] was reciting the Shema."

(ee1): "worshipped it." V^2 adds "in the presence of ten [men]."

(ff1): "Repent." O^8 adds "Wicked one."

(ee2): "And there is a tradition." O^8 reads "As we say . . . ." G reads: "There is a tradition: Because he engaged in sorcery . . . ."

Chapter 8

Stammaitic Astrology (Shabbat 156b)

In the two previous chapters we analyzed *sugyot* composed of double narratives, in which the redactors juxtaposed two stories to create new meaning. Here we continue the study of such "story cycles" with a series of three stories about astrology which will allow us to examine an important aspect of the Stammaitic worldview. Because no distinction existed between what we would call astronomy and astrology, the rabbis could no more easily dismiss astrology outright than we today can ignore the efficacy of modern medicine.[1] "A learned and cultured man of those times," Saul Lieberman observed, "could not reject the science of Astrology, a science recognized and acknowledged by all the civilized ancient world."[2] Indeed, the classicist F. E. Robbins noted, "[B]y the second century of our era the triumph of astrology was complete. With few exceptions everyone from emperor to the lowliest slave, believed in it."[3] This "scientific" truth, however, potentially clashed with a host of tenets of rabbinic Judaism—free will, reward and punishment, repentance, and divine providence among others. Numerous traditions scattered throughout the Bavli and other rabbinic compilations offer a variety of perspectives on this topic, spanning the spectrum from embrace to rebuff, accommodation to resistance.

These three stories appear within a *sugya* found at bShab 156a–b, considered the "locus classicus" of rabbinic treatments of astrology. This *sugya* introduces the famous shorthand formulae *yesh mazal le-yisrael* and *ayn mazal le-yisrael,* literally "Israel has a planet / Israel has no planet," in other words, the fate of a Jew is or is not determined by the celestial bodies. (The term *mazal* here means "planet," which included the sun and moon in the Aristotelian-Ptolemaic cosmology. However, to avoid confusion, I

will generally transliterate the word rather than translate it, especially as its meaning changes in some sources.) Neither the literal meaning of the formulae nor this paraphrase does full justice to the debate. As we will see, almost all the rabbinic traditions collected in our *sugya* concede that planetary bodies impact the fate of Jews to some extent.[4] The key question was not the validity of astrology per se but how and in what ways planetary bodies influenced the course of life, and whether that influence was absolute or provisional. Joseph Trachtenberg has put it well: "The issue was hardly at all whether the stars influence men but rather just how vital and irremediable their influence is."[5] These formulae become the standard rubrics with which both medieval jurists and modern scholars discuss rabbinic attitudes to astrology. Taken together, the formulae are cited six times in our *sugya* but attested only once elsewhere in the Bavli, and never in other rabbinic texts of the classical period.[6] This *sugya*, therefore, is of fundamental importance with respect to the nature of the debate in subsequent centuries.

The *sugya* can be designated a "theological *sugya*," that is, a carefully crafted literary unit devoted to the exploration of a discrete theological topic.[7] It begins with astrological traditions, continues with sources opposing astrology, and concludes with the story cycle of three stories. Traditions from this *sugya* are cited in almost every discussion of astrology, but the complex of three stories and the *sugya* itself rarely have been studied in their entirety.[8] Yet here, as in other such theological *sugyot* and story cycles, the whole is much greater than the sum of the parts, and each tradition can be fully appreciated only when understood within its literary context. I will first discuss the three stories from a literary perspective, then analyze their composition from a source-critical perspective, and finally explore the entire *sugya* both as a literary unit and in its cultural context. The text below follows ms Oxford 366, with major variants listed in the chapter appendix. The introductory lines that belong to the redactional frame of the *sugya* are set in a smaller font.

[1][A] From [the case of] Shmuel too [we learn that] "Israel has no *mazal*."

[B] For Shmuel and Ablat (a Persian sage) — while they were sitting, certain men were going to the marsh. Ablat said to Shmuel, "That man will go but not come back, as a snake will bite him and he will die."

[C] Shmuel said to him, "If he is a Jew, he will go and come back."

[D] While they were sitting and discussing it, he went and came back. Ablat arose, threw off his load, and found there a snake that had been cut and thrown into two pieces.

[E] Shmuel said to him, "What did you do?" He said to him, "Every day we throw the bread together (for a common meal) and eat. Today there was one with us who had no bread with him, and he was ashamed. I said to my companions, 'I will get up and throw (= collect) the bread for him.' When I arrived at him, I pretended as if I had taken from him, in order that he not be ashamed." He [Shmuel] said to him, "You did a mitsvah and were saved."

[F] Shmuel went out to the studyhouse and expounded, "*Righteousness (*tsedaqa*) saves from death (Prov 10:2/11:4)*. Not [only] from an unusual death but even from death itself."

[2][A] From [the case of] R. Akiba too [we learn that] "Israel has no *mazal*."

[B] For R. Akiba—he had a daughter. The astrologers[9] said to him, "On that day that she enters her wedding canopy, a snake will bite her and she will die.

[C] He worried a great deal about the matter.

[D] On that day that she entered [the wedding canopy], she took her wedding crown[10] and stuck it into a crack [in the wall]. It happened (*itrami*) for her that it entered the eye of a snake. In the morning, when she took it (from the wall), the snake was adhering and coming out after it.

[E] Her father said to her, "What did you do?" She said to him, "In the evening a poor man came and called at the door [asking for alms]. Everyone was busy with the [wedding] meal, and no one heard him. I got up and took it, and said [to myself], 'This portion that you gave me, I will give to him.'" He said to her, "You did a mitsvah and were saved."

[F] R. Akiba went out and expounded, "*Righteousness (*tsedaqa*) saves from death (Prov 10:2/11:4)*. Not [only] from an unusual death but [even] from death itself."

[3][A] From [the case of] Rav Nahman bar Yitshaq too [we learn that] "Israel has no *mazal*."

[B] For the mother of Rav Nahman bar Yitshaq—the astrologers said to her, "Your son will be a thief."

[C] She did not allow him to uncover his head. She said to him, "Cover your head in order that the fear of heaven be upon you and pray for mercy." He did not know why she said this to him.

[D] One day he was studying while sitting under [someone else's] date palm. His covering fell from his head. He raised up his eyes. He saw the date palm. The evil inclination overpowered him. He ascended and cut off the date-cluster with his teeth.

These three stories at first glance appear to be relatively straightforward and are often treated in a cursory manner,[11] yet they contain both many points of literary artistry and a few narrative difficulties, which shed light on the compositional techniques of the redactors and their goals in creating this story cycle. In the first story, Ablat, a Persian sage, asserts to Shmuel, a rabbi, that a certain man will suffer an untimely death on that day. That Ablat is Persian the audience would know from the name and perhaps from his appearance in other Bavli sources.[12] His prediction derives from his astrological expertise, a datum not explicit in the story proper (though the audience may have associated astrology with magi) but which emerges from the introductory line stating the topic (1A). Shmuel's equal confidence in claiming that the man will return is less clear. Even if the planets do not exclusively determine the fate of Jews, as the story concludes, how does Shmuel know that this man will perform good deeds that day?[13] Nor does Shmuel know that the man has acted righteously throughout his life, since the sage was not previously acquainted with him, as evident from the conditional declaration, "If he is a Jew."[14] We could say that Shmuel assumes that all Jews have some good deeds to their credit and these will trump fate, but this explanation seems forced. At all events, this opening effectively creates dramatic tension by pitting Shmuel against Ablat, Jew against Gentile, reward and punishment against fate: who will be right and which worldview true? Report of the man's return immediately resolves the tension concerning *what* will happen and replaces it—after Ablat's discovery of the severed snake—with the question of *how* it happened (D). Thus, the story involves an artful temporal structure, initially narrating the beginning and end, and only afterward filling in the middle through a first-person flashback.[15]

The man's recounting of his mitsvah generates a measure-for-measure motif: the man "threw the bread" into the basket, while the snake was "cut and thrown" into two parts.[16] This motif makes it abundantly clear that his deed caused his salvation but reveals nothing of the means. Surprisingly, the story fails to explain the actual cutting of the snake. Rashi fills in the lacuna by adding that the man "cut it [the snake] with the reeds without sensing it."[17] Even this requires some elaboration: apparently we are to understand that the party went out to the marsh[18] to cut reeds (since that is standard work in a marsh),[19] and therefore carried sickles or scythes, and as the man withdrew his tool from (or returned it to) his pack, he unknowingly severed the snake that otherwise would have bitten him. This narrative gap and the interpretive demands it places on the audience strike me as unusually large, even by the standards of rabbinic stories, and below I will argue that the gap results from the way the storytellers have reworked their source.[20] The advantages of this reworking, however, inhere in the variation of narrative elements compared to the other two stories of the unit, which I also discuss below.

The "miraculous" deliverance prompts Shmuel to articulate the moral, that because the protagonist performed a meritorious deed God saved his life by altering the course of nature. Here we must translate "*tsedaqa*" of the verse as "righteousness," rather than "charity," as the virtuous man provided no food for his poor colleague. Rather, the act of piety was preventing shame and preserving human dignity. The story, then, acknowledges that the astrological worldview holds true to a certain extent; Ablat was correct that, but for the righteous act, the snake would have killed the man.[21] Nevertheless, "Israel has no *mazal*," that is, the fate of Jews is not fixed *solely* by the stars and may always be trumped by righteous deeds.

From a literary perspective Shmuel's exposition, "Not [only] from an unusual death but even from death itself," generalizes the moral. Righteous acts save not only from a premature, untimely death (such as that of the snakebite, as evidenced in our story) but even from typical deaths ("death itself"), presumably bestowing additional years of life on someone who otherwise would have died appropriately in ripe old age.[22]

In the story of R. Akiba's daughter, the astrologers offer a similar ominous prediction, death by snakebite on her wedding day (section 6).[23] As numerous folklorists have noted, the prediction of a bride or groom fated to die at his/her nuptial hour is a common motif in both Jewish and world folklore.[24] The sexual and phallic symbolism of the snake in the bridal chamber needs no comment in this regard. Haim Schwarzbaum and Galit Hasan-Rokem connect the tale to Thompson's *Motif Index of Folk Litera-*

ture, T172, "All husbands have perished on the bridal night," and to Aarne-Thompson's, *The Types of the Folk-Tale*, 507B, "The monster in the bridal chamber," and 934B, "The hero destined to die on his wedding day."[25] The motif appears already in the Apocryphal *Book of Tobit*, where the demon Asmodeas kills seven grooms of Sarah, daughter of Raguel, on their wedding nights.[26] Subsequently the angel Raphael reveals to Tobias that he can marry Sarah and drive away the demon by burning the liver and heart of a fish.[27] Schwarzbaum suggests that originally stories of this type had the hero die, thereby demonstrating the futility of escaping fate, but that "later folk-accretion, i.e. a posterior folk-corrective intended to improve the hero's prospects" generated stories with happy endings.[28] Be that as it may, the very point of the talmudic version is that the bride saves herself through a pious act.

Yonah Fraenkel suggests that the wedding celebrants sinned by neglecting the poor man due to their excessive preoccupation with their own rejoicing.[29] Because of their self-indulgence and lack of pity toward their fellow human beings, they were to be punished with the death of the bride. This reading, in my opinion, distorts the thrust of the story by transforming it into a straightforward lesson of reward and punishment, thereby almost eliminating the critical tension between that theological principle and astral determinism[30] (not to mention the problem of vicarious punishment, unless we assume the bride too celebrated excessively). Moreover, the prediction of the astrologers seems to have taken place at her birth, or at least some time before the wedding was arranged, and without any connection to behavior at the feast. No culpability need be assumed; even the (unintended, inadvertent) failure to heed the call for alms provided the bride, who happened to hear, with the opportunity to act.

The bride sticks the wedding crown in the wall crack, so it would seem, to keep it safe, so that it will not be misplaced or stolen. That the wedding crown (or its pins for attaching to hair[31]) kills the snake creates a powerful irony, as the nuptial accoutrements which otherwise mark her for death (according to the astrologers) save her life.[32] Here too, the storyteller employs an artful use of time: he recounts the immediate cause of the snake's death but omits the ultimate cause, the charitable deed, although the almsgiving is a prior event in the fabula. And the protagonist again reports the act of piety in the first-person, which to my mind personalizes the deed. As the daughter relates her experience, the audience shares her perspective, sensing more directly her empathy for the beggar and initiative taken to ameliorate his plight.

R. Akiba pronounces the same lesson as Shmuel, though here it fits

slightly better. While the term *tsedaqa* certainly can be translated as "righteousness," in rabbinic usage "charity" is more widespread. Elsewhere the Bavli interprets these verses from Prov 10:2/11:4 in terms of charity.[33] Moreover, the term "mitsvah" in R. Akiba's initial response often refers to charity, the commandment *par excellence*.[34]

In the third story, Rav Nahman bar Yitshaq's mother attempts to avoid the regrettable prediction of astrologers, as typically found in stories of this type, though such avoidance is not essayed by either Shmuel or R. Akiba (section 7). Why she does not tell her son the purpose of her admonition to keep his head covered, a point specified by the narrator (7C), is not completely clear. It seems that R. Akiba also did not inform his daughter of her dire fate but only "worried a great deal" to himself, although the narrator does not make it explicit in his case.[35] Perhaps the storyteller believes that for the parent to disclose the prediction to the child would somehow cause it to happen, and that silence increases the chances that the threatening outcome will fail to materialize. As is well known, in rabbinic and other cultures, curses should not be articulated, lest the act of giving them voice simultaneously bring them to effect.[36] On the other hand, the parents may simply wish to spare the child the anguish of worrying about the eventuality.[37] In this case the mother's efforts ultimately prove futile, as Rav Nahman bar Yitshaq literally rips off another's fruit and thereby becomes a thief as predicted. There would seem to be a slight incongruity, then, between the story and the introductory line, in that here the astrologers' prediction comes true. Following the commentaries, we must explain that the sage was indeed free from planetary influence as long as he covered his head, and only his failure to continue to perform that mitsvah made him susceptible to his "destiny."[38] Or we might explain that his constant vigilance in covering his head restricted his stealing to this one anomalous act, and he did not become a habitual thief as predicted. Both explanations demonstrate again that the fate of Jews is not determined *exclusively* by the stars.

Structure and Composition

A common structure underlies the three stories, although the third story is abbreviated and lacks the final two sections:

(A) An introductory line states the theme of the story.
(B) Astrologer(s) predict(s) that an unfortunate event will befall a Jew.

(C) A Jew reacts to the prediction.
(D) The event fails to occur as predicted (reading story 3 as above).
(E) The sage questions the protagonist, who responds with the description of the meritorious deed; the sage explains why he/she was saved.
(F) The sage then expounds (*darash*) that lesson in midrashic form, i.e., based on Scripture.

Several common phrases and expressions complement the structure in creating links between stories, apart from the verbatim repetitions in sections A and F. The first two stories share the phrase "a snake will bite [him/her] and [he/she] will die" about the predicted disaster (B). The second and third stories share the phrase "astrologers said to [him/her]" about the forecasters of the disaster, in that same section (B). The first and third stories both use "cut" in the description of the event in sections D: the snake is cut (*paseeq*) into two halves, and Rav Nahman bar Yitshaq cut off (*pasqeih*) the date cluster. So we have linguistic ties between each pair of stories. Moreover, the man tells his companions that he will throw (*marmina*) the bread into the basket in the first story, and regarding R. Akiba's daughter "it happened (*itrami*) for her" that the wedding crown pierced the snake's eye (sections D), words from the same root. In the first story the man recounts that he "got up" and pretended to "take" (*shaqli*) bread from the man; in the second story the daughter recounts that she "got up" and "took" (*shaqlit*) the portion of food given to her (sections E).

These similarities and connections among the stories are balanced by subtle variations of the use of narrative elements. Sections A adduce the cases of three rabbis: the first an unrelated party to the subject of the prediction (Shmuel), the second a close relative (Akiba), the third the party himself (Rav Nahman bar Yitshaq). We shift from a father and daughter in the second story to a mother and son in the third. Sections B vary in the nature of the unfortunate event, from an imminent death that very day, to a distant death on a defined day sometime in the future, to crime and descent into a criminal life (thus the omission of sections E and F in story 3, as the verse deals with death). Technically speaking, the type of astrology shifts from interrogational astrology (in which questions are posed and answered based on the planetary configuration at the time of the question)[39] in the first story, to genethlialogy (astrology based on the horoscope at the moment of birth) in the second and third. In sections C, the reactions vary from rejection (Shmuel), to inaction or perhaps fatalistic acceptance (Akiba), to an effort to avoid the fate (the mother). In sections D the pre-

diction fails to occur through the inadvertent actions of the protagonists of the first two stories, but through the constant vigilance of the character (and his mother) in the third story (always keeping his head covered). Yet it is through an inadvertent event (the head covering happens to fall off) that the prediction comes true. This variation, to a certain extent, is a product of the diverse predictions of sections B. Note that head coverings appear in both the second and third stories, though they function in almost opposite ways: the removal of a head covering (the wedding crown) obviates the predicted outcome in the second story, whereas the removal of the head covering effects the predicted outcome in the third (sections D). Also in sections D the meritorious deed shifts from "commandments between man and his fellow" in the first two stories to "commandments between man and God" in the third. While the deeds in the first two stories, preventing humiliation and almsgiving, are different, both involve poor men and food. Whereas in the first story the hero *pretends* to *take* food from the poor man, in the second the heroine *actually gives* food to the supplicant.

The precise structure, common language, and nuanced variations indicate that the compilers of this story cycle substantively reworked their sources so as to create a high degree of narrative cohesiveness. It would seem very unlikely that they combined three preexistent stories that happened to share the same structure, common phrases, and variation of elements.[40] The literary and structural analysis suggests that the compilers either composed all three stories in this way, or composed or reworked two stories anew on the basis of a received story, emulating its structure. The difficulties noted above in the analysis of the first story point to the second possibility, as it is unlikely that a free composition would contain such serious narrative gaps; the discussion of sources below will support this conclusion. For the present the important point is that the compilers did not simply gather stories loosely connected to the topic of astrology and transmit them, untouched but for the introductory segue (sections A). Rather, they reworked or created sources to fashion a cohesive and precise composition. By this means they explored various possibilities and aspects of astrological prognostications—different types of predictions, reactions, meritorious acts, means of avoiding fate, and eventualities. The grouping of stories communicates a totality of meanings, ideas, and facets of the issue that cannot be expressed by a single story alone. This mode of activity, incidentally, suggests that the compilers were the Stammaim, as we do not find Amoraim manipulating traditions in this way; below I will argue this point in greater detail.[41]

This series of three stories recalls other such cycles of stories devoted to exploring aspects of a topic, as has been delineated by Eli Yassif.[42] These include the seven stories about husbands leaving their wives for the academy for extended periods of time in bKet 62b–63a,[43] and the unit of three stories of destruction in bGit 55b–57a, which appears within a much larger cycle of more than twenty stories. In both of these story cycles the circumstances and narrative elements have been varied for purposes of comparison and contrast, so as to stimulate thought on the issue, while shared phrases and locutions forge additional links between the stories. The structuring of the three stories in bGit 55b–57a in particular bears strong affinities to the structure of our unit here. Those three stories are introduced by a formulaic opening line, "Because of (a) Qamtsa and Bar Qamtsa, (b) a cock and a hen, (c) the shaft of a litter was (a) Jerusalem, (b) Tur Malka, (c) Betar destroyed." All three stories contain the line "[he/they] said to the emperor, 'The Jews are rebelling against you,'" and in each case this report is false. And, as pointed out by Paul Mandel, the causes of the three putative rebellions vary; the storytellers seem to be exploring different provocations to, and aspects of, war between the Roman Empire and the Jews.[44] Most interestingly, the first two stories are highly developed narratives, but the third story ends abruptly, almost *in medias res*, noting that the emperor "came against them" and no more. In this respect the similarity to our series of three with an abbreviated third story is stunning, and one wonders if there are other such trilogies in the Bavli.

Sources

This claim concerning the redactors' efforts in composing the unit finds support in a source-critical examination. A parallel to the first story appears in yShab 8:6, 8d.[45]

yShab 6:10, 8d	bShab 156b
Two students of R. Hanina went out to cut wood. A certain astrologer saw them. He said, "These two will go out but not return."	For Shmuel and Ablat (a Persian sage) — while they were sitting, certain men were going to the marsh. Ablat said to Shmuel, "That man will go but not come back, as a snake will bite him and he will die."

When they went out they came upon a certain old man. He said to them, "Give me alms, for it has been three days since I have tasted anything." They had a loaf of bread.

They cut it in half and gave it to him." He ate and prayed for them. He said to them, "May your souls be preserved this day just as you have preserved my soul for me this day." They went out safely and came back safely.

There were some men there who had heard his [the astrologer's] words. They said to him, "Did you not say, 'These two will go out but not return'"? He said, "There is here a man of lies [= me] whose astrology is lies." Even so they went and searched and found a snake, half in this one's load and half in the other's.

They said, "What good deed did you do today?" They told him the deed.

Shmuel said to him, "If he is a Jew, he will go and come back."

While they were sitting and discussing it, he went and came back. Ablat arose, threw off his load, and found there a snake that had been cut and thrown into two pieces.

Shmuel said to him, "What did you do?" He said to him, "Every day we throw the bread together (for a common meal) and eat. Today there was one with us who had no bread with him, and he was ashamed. I said to my companions, "I will get up and throw (= collect) the bread for him." When I arrived at him, I pretended as if I had taken from him, in order that he not be ashamed." He [Shmuel] said to him, "You did a mitsvah and were saved."

He [the astrologer] said, "What can I do? For the God of the Jews is appeased by half a loaf."

Shmuel went out to the study-house and expounded, "*Righteousness (*tsedaqa*) saves from death (Prov 10:2/11:4)*. Not [only] from an unusual death but [even] from death itself."

Despite the considerable differences between these stories, they share sufficient similarities to be considered parallel versions of an original account, and several scholars have noted their interrelationship.[46] In both, an astrologer predicts that a Jew (or two Jews) who leave town to do some work will die, but the Jew(s) perform(s) a good deed and return unscathed. In both a snake would have killed the hero(s) but is inadvertently and unknowingly sliced into two parts; the heroes' packs are searched and the snake found there. The search of the packs to find a bifurcated snake is so distinct an element, and, to the best of my knowledge, without parallel elsewhere in rabbinic literature, that it must indicate a common origin. The questions are: which version is more original, which reworked, and why?

The version of the Yerushalmi reads smoothly. Because they go forth to cut wood, the students carry an axe or knife. In order to slice the loaf they naturally remove that implement from one of the packs, and then return it after parting from the poor man. In doing so they accidentally sever the snake that otherwise would have bitten them. Exquisite narrative technique: the very act of providing for the poor man simultaneously saves their lives. The meritorious deed brings reward, not only through God's taking note of their action and responding, but through the immediate consequences of the act itself! Moreover, the nature of their act generates a measure-for-measure theme: the knife that cut the loaf in two halves and preserved the poor man's life cut the snake in two halves and preserved their own lives, much as the man states. Note further that the reaction of the astrologers' interlocutors is perfectly understandable, because everyone witnesses the prediction fail when the students return.

The Bavli version does not read smoothly. We noted the large narrative gap of how the snake is severed, as the story fails to mention either a knife or the workers' purpose. How Shmuel can confront the astrologer by asserting that the man will survive is also unclear, as no good deed has yet been performed.[47] From an aesthetic perspective, the Bavli version loses the direct relationship between deed and reward (as the meritorious deed no longer involves cutting food) and manufactures an alternative, somewhat less elegant, measure-for-measure motif.[48]

Therefore, it seems that the Bavli storytellers reworked the Yerushalmi source and in that process created the narrative difficulties noted above. I suggest that two major considerations motivated the reworking. First, they wished to adjust the structure of this story to the common structure according to which they decided to pattern all three stories—a structure they borrowed from the second story, as I will argue below. This structure involved the astrologer's prediction, reaction to it by a Jew, falsification of the prediction, and the retrospective report of the deed. The storytellers reordered the Yerushalmi account to have the rejection of the astrologer at the outset, and the narrator's description of the deed was replaced by the first-person account. Second, they wished to tell of a hero's meritorious deed other than charity, as that is the pious act of R. Akiba's daughter. They therefore created the somewhat contrived scenario of pretending to contribute to a common meal, though they retained the elements of a poor man and food. And, as noted in previous chapters, shame was a significant cultural concern to the Stammaim, so they understandably fashioned a good deed of that type.[49]

Let us now turn to the final section of the story (1F), which appears almost verbatim in the second story. Once again, it seems more likely that one storyteller borrowed and adapted the line from the other than that they independently invented the same midrash. But first we must clarify the text, as the reading attested in most manuscripts—"not [only] from an unusual death but even from death itself"—is problematic. While the story demonstrates that righteousness saves from an unusual (= premature) death, how does it teach about salvation from "death itself"? And what exactly does it mean to be saved from "death itself"? Because it cannot mean that one never dies, I explained it in terms of receiving added longevity. But this explanation has no overt support in either the verse or the story. Now, the textual witnesses evince some suggestive variants. In contrast to the reading in the main manuscripts and printings, several textual witnesses reverse the order: "not from death itself but from an unusual death." This reading is found in the fragmentary manuscript Oxford-Bodl. heb. d. 21 (2676), in *Aggadot HaTalmud*, and in the first printings of the *Yalqut Shimoni* and *Eyn Yaakov*.[50] In addition, I have taken some liberty with the translation of the standard reading "not [only] from an unusual death but [even] from death itself. The word "even" (*afilu*) appears only in one textual attestation, so that the common reading is actually "not from an unusual death but from death itself," which makes little sense translated literally. (Who is ever saved from "death itself"?) In light of these difficulties it would seem that the original reading was probably "not from death itself but from an unusual

death," as already suggested by Ephraim Urbach, which is readily understandable.[51] Charity does not save one from death but from a premature or violent death, such that one lives out the fullness of one's years. Yet even this version reads awkwardly, as the first half of the lesson seems superfluous. It seems likely, therefore, that the passage was adapted from a similar teaching found at bBB 10a:

> R. Hiyya bar Abba said that R. Yohanan said: What is written, *Wealth is of no avail on the day of wrath, but righteousness (*tsedaqa*) saves from death (Prov 11:4)*. And it is written, *Ill-gotten wealth is of no avail, but righteousness (*tsedaqa*) saves from death (Prov 10:2)*. Why these two [types of] (*tsedaqa*)? One saves from an unusual death, and one saves from the punishment of Hell (*dina shel gehennom*).[52]

R. Yohanan explains that the repetition of the promise that "righteousness (*tsedaqa*) saves from death" in two proximate Proverbs verses pertains to two different deliverances: from the unusual death also mentioned in our story and from posthumous punishment ("the day of wrath"). (In the context of the Talmudic *sugya*, *tsedaqa* means "charity.") This midrash reads smoothly, accounting for the scriptural superfluity in terms of salvation in both this world and the next. The borrower in bShab 156b accepted the exegesis concerning an unusual death, since that fit the stories, and he simply added that the verse should not be taken literally ("not from death itself"). Scribes later "improved" the force of the exegesis by reversing the clauses, and the resulting awkwardness was subsequently further improved in one manuscript by adding "even." We should also note that the term "death itself" is anomalous, unattested outside of the story, whereas the notions of an "unusual death" and the "punishment of Hell" are fairly common.[53] This reconstruction is tentative, but I find the manuscript evidence sufficient to conclude that the lesson taught by Shmuel/R. Akiba is suspect and was probably adapted in some form from elsewhere.

If this is the case, then the question of whether the final section was transferred from the second story to the first or *vice versa* becomes less pressing, as it ultimately came to both from bBB 10a. Nevertheless, it would appear to be more original to the story of R. Akiba's daughter. First, the earlier form of the first story in the Yerushalmi lacks that conclusion. Second, the verse fits better in the story of R. Akiba, where the pious act is charity. While *tsedaqa* designates "righteousness" in the Bible, it generally refers to charity in rabbinic sources, as it does in bBB 10a, from which it was transferred.

The other major reworking of the first story from its form in the Yerushalmi is the addition of the dialogue between Shmuel and Ablat. We

noted that their interchange contrasts with that of R. Akiba's reaction to the astrologers in that Shmuel rejects the prediction outright, which makes for a variation in the sage's response. But why Ablat and Shmuel? First, Shmuel was an obvious choice, as he displays prodigious astrological knowledge in other Bavli traditions.[54] Second, Shmuel appears together with Ablat in two other Bavli sources. One begins in an almost identical fashion to ours, "Shmuel and Ablat were sitting (bAZ 30a)," and the other essentially claims that Shmuel had superior knowledge to Ablat:

> Ablat came upon Shmuel sleeping in the sun. He said to him: "Sage of the Jews! How can what is evil be good. (i.e., how can exposure to such heat be good)?" He said to him, "It is a day for bloodletting" (when one needs to be hot). — But that was not the case. There is a day on which the sun is beneficial for the whole year — the day of the *tekufa* of Tamuz (the summer solstice).[55] But he (Shmuel) thought: I will not reveal it to him (bShab 129a).

Here Ablat finds Shmuel engaging in an unhealthy practice, sleeping in the hot sun. Shmuel explains that he will have his blood let that day and therefore requires heat — the previous Talmudic passage explains that warmth is good during bloodletting. At this point a gloss explains that Shmuel was not in fact having his blood let that day.[56] Rather, it happened to be that singular day of the year upon which the sun is beneficial, not harmful, and Shmuel did not want to share such knowledge. Thus, the source portrays Shmuel as possessing superior medical and astronomical/astrological information to the Persian sage and as concealing such knowledge from him.[57] Taking these sources together we have all the elements that figure in our story: (a) a ready-made pair of Jewish and gentile sages in which the rabbi displays superior knowledge (bShab 129a), (b) the rabbi possesses great command of astrology (bEruv 56a, etc.), (c) an almost identical introductory line features in an account of those sages (bAZ 30a).

We now take up the other two stories. The story of R. Akiba's daughter has no earlier parallels. While this makes it hard to trace the tradition history, it may suggest that the story has not been reworked. Indeed, the signs of editorial intervention are modest, other than the addition of the framing lines (A, F).[58] While the phrases "the astrologers said to him" and "a snake will bite/bit him" appear in several other Bavli sources, these are common locutions that need not necessarily point to borrowing.[59] The motif of a poor man calling at the door to ask for alms is potentially more significant. Ari Elon has shown that this motif appears in at least six other Bavli stories in which the protagonist faces a lethal threat, and the interaction with

the poor man plays a role in survival or death.[60] But here again there is no clear evidence that the storytellers borrowed the phrase/motif from one of the other occurrences. Given the folkloric motifs and elements noted above, it seems likely that the redactors received this story in more or less its present form, simply adding the frame to adapt it for their purposes in this *sugya*. There is no clear source-critical evidence that the redactors changed the body of the story. This finding supports the conclusion above that the first story was reworked by the Bavli redactors. They emulated the structure of the second story but varied the elements to make for a more effective lesson.[61]

This brings us to the third story. Here, too, there are no earlier parallels, but we find signs of Stammaitic composition. Section B seems to have been generated by altering or reversing the lead characters of the preceding story. As opposed to a sage-father and daughter we have a mother and sage-son. The prediction that the child will become a thief derives from an element in an earlier section of the *sugya*, as I will discuss in more detail below in the analysis of the larger *sugya*. Rav Nahman bar Yitshaq is also quoted earlier in the *sugya*, which may be responsible for his being selected as protagonist. The recycling of elements from the proximate *sugya* or sections of the *sugya* is often a telltale sign of the redactional hand, for it is the redactors, and not the Amoraim, who are responsible for juxtaposing the traditions.[62] Section D probably draws on another Bavli story, in which R. Hiyya bar Ashi's wife seduces her husband by dressing as a prostitute:

> One day he was studying in his garden. She dressed herself up, passed back and forth before him. He said to her, "Who are you?" She said, "I am a prostitute[63] who returned today." He propositioned her. She said to him, "Bring me that pomegranate at the top of a branch (ms Vatican reads: branch of a palm)." He jumped, and went, and brought it to her (bQid 81b).[64]

Here we have the basic elements of a sage sitting and studying beneath a (palm) tree, temptation to sin (fornication/thievery), and the sin of ascending and taking fruit from the treetop. Moreover, a story found on the preceding Talmud folio relates of R. Akiba that once Satan appeared to him in the guise of "a woman atop a palm tree." When the sage saw her, he "grabbed hold of the palm and was going up," thereby endangering his life (bQid 81a). And in a discussion of thievery, bSanh 26b mentions the case of one of Rav Zevid's farmers who "stole a cluster (*qibora*) of unripe dates,"[65] the same sin as in our story. There are no explicit parallels to section C, though the importance of men covering their head appears in several Bavli

passages, but not in Palestinian sources, to the best of my knowledge.[66] Admittedly, the evidence is sketchy, but the common elements suggest that the redactors may have cobbled together sources and added a few lines to create this account.

Overall, source-critical evidence supports the indications of the literary analysis that the redactors played a prominent role in reworking or composing the traditions of this unit. My best guess is that the redactors merely added an introductory and concluding frame to the story of R. Akiba and his daughter, which they otherwise transmitted as received. They reworked a story of an astrologer predicting the death of students who go out to work (found in the Yerushalmi), altering its structure to match that of the story of the daughter, and adding the same frame. And they either composed the story of Rav Nahman bar Yitshaq themselves or reworked an earlier tradition by drawing on other BT passages. As in other cases, some aspects of the reworking process are more evident than others. We are frustrated by the lack of parallel versions that testify to textual stages prior to the reworking. While the precise details of the reworking process are uncertain, it seems clear that the redactors substantively reworked their sources to compose this unit, imposing a frame on each story, producing a common structure, and varying the narrative elements. This point is crucial: the redactors fashioned this unit with great care, and by means of the creative adaptation of earlier material. In this way they created a story cycle to explore the different aspects of the tension between astrology and free will and between celestial determinism as opposed to reward and punishment.

Redactional Context

These three stories appear as the concluding unit of a lengthy "theological *sugya*" devoted to astrology, and must now be examined in that context. The following translation also follows ms Oxford 366 with major variants collected in the appendix. In the first unit the comments of Babylonian Amoraim are printed with underline to distinguish them from the Palestinian Amoraic traditions upon which they are based, and the contribution of the Stammaim printed in smaller type.

[I]

[1] It was written in the notebook of R. Yehoshua b. Levi

[A] He who [was born] on the first of the week [= Sunday] will be

strong, and not have 'one thing' in him. What is the meaning of "not have one thing in him." If I say "not have one *good* thing in him," — But behold, Rav <Ashi> said "I was born on the first of the week" (and clearly Rav Ashi had good qualities). Rather it means "not have one *bad* thing in him." But behold, Rav Ashi said, "I and Dimi b. Kakozita were born on the first of the week. I rule [the academy][67] and he is a chief of thieves" (and clearly has bad qualities). Rather, [it means] completely good or completely bad.[68] <What is the reason? Because light and darkness were created then.>

[B] He [who is born] on the second of the week will be a quarrelsome man. Because the waters were divided then.

[C] He [who is born] on the third of the week will be a rich and fornicating man. What is the reason? Because the flora were created then.

[D] He [who is born] on the fourth of the week will be an intelligent and wise man. What is the reason? Because the luminaries were suspended [in the heavens] then.

[E] He [who is born] on the fifth of the week will be a man who performs good deeds. What is the reason? Because fish and birds were created then.

[F] He [who is born] on the eve of the Sabbath will be a busy [*hazran*] man. Rav Nahman bar Yitshaq said, "Busy with commandments."

[G] He [who is born] on the Sabbath will die on the Sabbath. Because they desecrated the great Sabbath day for him. Rabbah bar Rav Sheilah said, "And he will be called very holy."

[2] R. Hanina said to them: Go and tell the Son of Levi that it is not the planet (*mazal*) [ruling over] the day [of birth] that determines [one's fate] but the planet [ruling over] the hour [of birth] that determines [one's fate].

[A] He who was born under the sun will be a proud man, eating of his own and drinking of his own [property]; and his secrets will be revealed; and if he steals, he will not succeed.

[B] He who was born under Venus will be a rich and fornicating man. What is the reason? Because the luminaries were created under it [Venus].

[C] He who was born under Mercury will be an intelligent and wise man. What is the reason? Because it is the <scribe> of the sun.

[D] He who is born under the moon will be a man who suffers illnesses. He will build and destroy, destroy and build. He will eat

from what is not his and drink from what is not his; and his secrets will be hidden; and if he steals, he will succeed.

[E] He who is born under Saturn will be a man whose plans are frustrated; and some say: the plans against him are frustrated.

[F] He who is born under Jupiter [*tsedeq*] will be a charitable man [*tsadqan*]. Rav Nahman bar Yitshaq said, "Charitable in the Commandments."

[G] He who is born under Mars [*maadim* = the red one] will be a man who sheds blood. Rav Ashi said, "Either a thief or a bloodletter or a slaughterer or a circumcisor." But behold, Rava said, "I was born under Mars." Abaye said to him, "You too punish and kill (with your sharp, deadly responses in debate.)"

[II]

[3]

[A] It was said. R. Hanina said: "A *mazal* makes one wise. A *mazal* makes one rich. And Israel has a *mazal*."

[B] R. Yohanan said: "Israel has no *mazal*." And R. Yohanan follows his reasoning [articulated elsewhere].

[C] For R. Yohanan said: "How do we know that 'Israel has no *mazal*'? For it says, *Thus said the Lord: Do not learn to go the way of the gentiles, And do not be dismayed by portents in the sky; let the gentiles be dismayed by them (Jer 10:2)*. The gentiles should be dismayed; Israel should not be dismayed."

[4]

[A] And Rav too holds that "Israel has no *mazal*."

[B] For Rav Yehuda said Rav said: How do we know that 'Israel has no *mazal*'? As it says,

[C] *He [God] took him (*hotsei*) [Abraham] outside and said: Look toward the heaven [and count the stars, if you are able to count them] (Gen 15:5)*.

Abraham said before the Holy blessed One: "Master of the Universe! *My steward will be my heir (Gen 15:3)*."

He [God] said to him, "No! *Your very own issue will be your heir (Gen 15:4)*." He said before him: "Master of the Universe. I have seen my astrological sign (*itstagninut*),[69] and I am not fit to have a son."

He [God] said to him, "Go out (*tsei*; i.e., desist) from your astrology! What is your concern? That Jupiter (*tsedeq*) is standing in the East? I will move it and make it stand in the West." Thus it is

written, *Who has roused Jupiter from the East; [Summoned him to His service]? (Isa 41:2).*

[III]

[5]

[A] From [the case of] Shmuel too [we learn that] "Israel has no *mazal*."

[6]

[A] From [the case of] R. Akiba too [we learn that] "Israel has no *mazal*."

[7]

[A] From [the case of] Rav Nahman bar Yitshaq too [we learn that] "Israel has no *mazal*."

In many cases the redactional context of a story or aggadic unit is crucial to its interpretation, as the aggadic traditions contest or otherwise engage the proximate halakhic material. But here the *sugya* has been contextualized on the basis of a formal association rather than its themes or content. It appears in the 24th chapter of Tractate Shabbat in the section that comments on Mishnah Shabbat 24:3, which deals with permitted and forbidden methods of feeding animals on the Sabbath. In the course of the discussion, the Talmud cites a relevant tradition pertaining to the kneading of bran introduced by, "It was written in the notebook of Zeira" (156a).[70] After a brief discussion, the Talmud cites a tradition unrelated to Sabbath law but introduced by a similar formula, "It was written in the notebook of Levi." There follows the opening line of our *sugya*, "It was written in the notebook of R. Yehoshua b. Levi," clearly cited here because of the parallel introductory formula. Our *sugya,* then, has no thematic connection to the legal or even aggadic discussions in Tractate Shabbat where it is contextualized, and must be interpreted as an autonomous composition.

This *sugya* exhibits the best of Stammaitic compositional techniques. It consists of three major units (designated by the Roman numerals I, II, III) and seven sections (1–7). The two sections of the first unit, attributed to the Palestinian Amoraim R. Yehoshua b. Levi and R. Hanina, offer seven-part schemas setting forth the nature of astrological influences (I, 1–2). The second unit, after briefly citing the same R. Hanina of unit I, continues with two exegetical traditions, both of which argue that "Israel has no *mazal*" (II, 3–4). The third unit is composed of our series of three stories, each making the same claim (III, 5–7). We thus have a composition consisting of seven- and three-part units: the seven larger sections include two subsections of seven parts (1, 2; though it must be conceded that these are a func-

tion of the seven days of the week and the seven "planets") and a series of three stories (5–7).

Although the first unit does not use the expression per se, it obviously assumes that "Israel has a *mazal*." The second unit reveals that this point is the subject of an Amoraic debate, as marked by the technical term *itamar*, "it was said": whereas R. Hanina holds that "Israel has a *mazal*," R. Yohanan claims, "Israel has no *mazal*."[71] Traditions of the third unit are unanimous that "Israel has no *mazal*." These formulae serve as the conceptual scheme according to which the Stammaim organized the traditions and created the structure of the *sugya*. The redactional hand is particularly evident in the use of these repeated formulations.

Mnemonic links between units I and II are forged by the citation of R. Hanina (the tradent of section 2) at the outset of unit II; links between unit II and unit III result from the repetition of "Israel has no *mazal*" in sections 3–7; and links between units I and III derive from the final story, featuring Rav Nahman bar Yitshaq, whose statements appear in the first two sections (1F, 2F), and from the prediction that he will become a thief, which hearkens back to some of the horoscopes involving thievery (2A, 2D, 2G).[72]

A different literary genre characterizes each of the three major units. The first contains "scientific" knowledge, the astrological traditions in the possession of two sages.[73] That the traditions of R. Yehoshua b. Levi are written in a notebook marks them as distinct from typical Oral Torah and perhaps indicates esoteric wisdom.[74] The second unit consists of midrash, including a typical exegesis of a verse (3C) and an exegetical narrative (4C). The third unit consists of the sage-stories discussed above (5–7). The three different genres derive from three different epistemological bases. Scientific knowledge presumably derives from the study of nature, or, if this is too modern a scientific conception, at least from received secular wisdom. Midrashic authority emerges from Scripture and revelation; sage-stories derive their authority from the character and experiences of the sages.[75] As a whole, one can view this *sugya* in terms of competing genres and epistemologies. Whereas astrology makes certain claims about the influence of the planets over human fate (unit I), midrash/Scripture and narrative/exemplary experience of the sages teach somewhat differently (II–III).[76] The arrangement of material, beginning with a strong statement of the cogency of astrology in the first unit and then introducing opposing views in the second and third units, suggests that the overall message of the *sugya* sides with the moderately "anti-astrological" position. Whether by

midrashim (3), an exegetical narrative (4), or sage-stories (5–7), you find that "Israel has no *mazal*." The meticulous arrangement of traditions and the connections between units should also suffice to demonstrate that we are dealing with a deliberate and meaningful composition of the redactors. Here again we have an aggadic *sugya* characterized by all the standard qualities of halakhic *sugyot*.

Unit I: Palestinian Astrological Traditions and Their Reception

As is well known, astrology was among the most transcultural and syncretistic sciences; ancient Mesopotamian, Egyptian, Greco-Roman, Indian, and Persian ideas moved and mixed throughout late antiquity; and texts were translated, adapted and borrowed relentlessly. Jews had absorbed astrological speculations already in the Second Temple period, and we find astrological ideas attested in the pseudepigrapha, Dead Sea Scrolls, and other writings.[77] The zodiacs found on the mosaics of synagogues of the Galilee would also seem to testify to a deep engagement with astrology among Palestinian Jews of late antiquity.[78] These processes have been extensively studied, so I will not cover familiar territory except insofar as it illuminates specific issues.

The type of astrology depicted in the first two sections is genethlialogical, the discovery of an individual's fate based on the configuration of the planets and other data at the time of birth or conception, also known as "horoscopes" or "nativities."[79] Probably the most common type of astrology in late antiquity, the underlying assumption held that the position of the celestial orbs at the time of an individual's birth determined aspects of his or her life. From R. Hanina's comment to R. Yehoshua b. Levi that it is not the "*mazal* [ruling over] the day" that determines one's fate, it is clear that R. Yehoshua offers an example of horoscopes relating to the "planetary week," that is, the planet associated with each day of the week. The typical scheme linked Sunday with the Sun, Monday with the Moon, Tuesday with Mars, Wednesday with Mercury, Thursday with Jupiter, Friday with Venus, and Saturday with Saturn.[80] So, when R. Yehoshua b. Levi refers to "He who is born on the second day," he means "He who is born under the moon, the planet that 'rules' on Monday." R. Hanina, in contrast, considers the planet that determines one's fate to be that which "rules" over the hour of birth. Ancient astrologers associated each hour of the day with one of the seven planets, cycling in the order Saturn, Jupiter, Mars, Sun, Venus, Mercury, and Moon, such that each planet ruled over several hours on each

day.[81] Both sages, then, subscribe to a similar astrological worldview but disagree on which particular system to follow.

The horoscopes related by both sages deal mainly with personality traits and occupations. In this respect they are typical of the leading astrological handbooks of late antiquity, which focus mostly on these topics, although some include predictions concerning a great variety of other aspects of life.[82] I have found that all of the prognostications of our sages appear in late antique astrological literature, with the exception of "not have one thing in him" and "dying on the Sabbath" (see below).[83] This is not surprising, considering the prolixity of ancient astrologers. Firmicus Maternus refers to more than 250 occupations in his *Matheseos*, while Ptolemy's *Tetrabiblos* so proliferates in personality traits as to read like a thesaurus.[84] For the most part, then, the forecasts of these two units draw on the standard astrology of the time. That the Talmudic traditions are much briefer and less complex probably results in part from their oral form of preservation. Despite the purported origin of the first section "in the notebook of R. Yehoshua b. Levi," the traditions were ultimately transmitted orally, together with the rest of the Bavli, and formulated economically for mnemonic purposes.[85]

However, the relevant celestial data mentioned by our two rabbis—limited to the planet ruling the day or hour of birth—are very elementary when compared with much of the contemporary astrological literature.[86] Horoscopes generally involved the signs of the zodiac and even the various degrees within each sign, the interaction of multiple planets, the direction of movement of the ruling planet, and also often distinguished between different parts of the day.[87] Nevertheless, we do find some brief descriptions of the general qualities associated with each planet. The author of *The Syriac Books of Medicines* (sixth century), writes:

> He who is born under the Moon will be a son of guile and wickedness, and thou wilt not be able to stand [i.e., depend] upon his word, and he will be a fornicator. His exterior will be better than his interior. He who is born under Ares [i.e., Mars—J.R.] will have blue and red eyes, and be a lover of war and blood.[88]

Interestingly, the word for "fornicator," *znaya,* is cognate with that used by R. Yehoshua in section 1.3.[89] Therefore the core Palestinian traditions are fairly typical of astrological writing of late antiquity, and reveal almost no specifically Jewish or rabbinic content, with the exception of the mention of the Sabbath (1G). Without the attributions to the sages, one would not necessarily classify the material as rabbinic, and easily could associate them

with non-rabbinic Jews or Christians, or with anyone who used the same system of reference to the days of the week.

The original seven-part schemes of the two Palestinian Amoraim—appearing mainly in Palestinian Aramaic[90]—have received two sets of comments, first by Babylonian Amoraim, denoted above by underlining, and second by the Stammaim, that printed in the smallest type. The Stammaitic glosses can be recognized by several features.[91] Many are introduced by "what is the reason," a standard marker of a later gloss. As in much of the Stammaitic stratum, the function of the glosses is explanatory. They exhibit copious manuscript variants. And, as I will argue below, several of the glosses stand in tension with the force of the astrological scheme, reflecting a different agenda.

The seven comments of the Babylonian Amoraim (two each by Rav Ashi and Rav Nahman bar Yitshaq, one each for Rabbah bar Rav Sheilah, Rava, and Abaye) are diverse.[92] At first glance they simply define (1F, 2F, Rav Ashi in 2G) or explicate (1A, 1G, Rava and Abaye in 2G) the statements of the Palestinian sages. However, in the larger context they serve three main functions. First, the comments add the perspective of Babylonian Amoraim to the traditions of the Palestinians. Without these comments we might have assumed that Palestinian Amoraim espoused astrology while Babylonians rejected it. Second, the comments support and reinforce the astrological claims. For instance, Abbaye explains how Rava's horoscope accurately befits him: he too spills (metaphoric) blood through his "lethal" responses in the course of the verbal violence of academic debate.[93] The force of Rav Ashi's first observation,[94] taken in and of itself, is ambiguous, and could be a comment, query, or even objection.[95] But, in context it functions to help clarify the meaning of the obscure phrase "not one thing in him" and thereby supports the astrological claim: the predicted "one-sidedness" of those born on Sunday is attested in the fortunes of the glorious Rav Ashi and the dastardly Bar Kakozita. Thus, horoscopes prove true, not only about ordinary folk, but even of the rabbis themselves! Indeed, the planets deserve credit for Rav Ashi's becoming head of the academy, the highest position in the academic hierarchy.[96] Rav Nahman bar Yitshaq's comments, in similar fashion, claim that those "busy" performing commandments and giving alms engage in such activities due to planetary influence, which affirms the compatibility of astrology and the life of piety.

Third, the comments of the Babylonian Amoraim "Judaize" or "rabbinize" the horoscopes. Rav Ashi's final comment mentions the occupation of a circumcisor, and his first comment refers to ruling the academy, that is, being head of the academy (1A, 2G).[97] Rav Nahman bar Yitshaq's two com-

ments add to the general qualities of being "busy" and "charitable" that they involve the commandments (1F, 2F). Rabbah bar Rav Sheilah's comment, though its rationale is obscure, adds Jewish coloring by noting that such a one will be called "holy" (1G).[98] And Rava and Abaye's interchange, as noted, incorporates the violence of the academy into the type of bloodshed predicted for such horoscopes. In fact, this process may be evident already in R. Yehoshua b. Levi's Sabbath horoscope (1G), which, assuming the explanatory gloss is correct, predicts that one will die on the Sabbath because his birth involved violating the Sabbath. Clearly this is a uniquely Jewish concern that one would not expect to find in external literature.[99]

The Judaizing process continues in most of the Stammaitic glosses to R. Yehoshua b. Levi's scheme, which provide reasons for the horoscopes that relate to the creation account of Genesis 1 (1A–E). A type of pseudo-midrash, the comments correlate personality traits with the content of Scripture. For example, the intelligence associated with Wednesday results from the fact that the luminaries, which cause "enlightenment," were fashioned on the fourth day of creation. While some of the connections between the horoscopes and the phenomena created on those days are obscure and seem to have confounded the Talmudic commentaries,[100] the underpinning logic is less important than the assertion of a correlation. Astrological influences, to a certain extent, become epiphenomena of the original creation, known from Scripture and revelation.

Yet, even as these efforts to coordinate the horoscopes with Scripture serve to Judaize the science, they simultaneously create some tension with the underpinnings of the astrological rationale, for the horoscopes do not claim that the day itself determines one's fate but the planet associated with the day. The glosses, on the other hand, focus on the days and the entities originally created on those days, which need have nothing to do with the ruling planets.[101] The fates for those born on Tuesday, for example, become a function of flora having been created on Tuesday, and not a product of the influence of Mars, the planet associated with Tuesday. Actually, this tension appears already in R. Yehoshua's statement about the Sabbath, for here the effect clearly relates to the day, the Sabbath, not the planet ruling that day (Saturn); and perhaps the Stammaitic glosses take their cue from this statement, extrapolating analogous ideas to the other days of the week. Now, one can always argue, of course, that we are dealing with tautologies: Saturn is the planet that rules the Sabbath day, hence it makes no difference whether we chalk up the fate to the Sabbath or to Saturn. Nonetheless, to attribute the effects to the entities created on a given day rather than to the planet tends to undercut the assumptions of the "science."

All in all, we have a varied and in certain respects awkward effort to domesticate or even appropriate astrology. The first salvos of the competing genres of the three major units mentioned above surface already in the Stammaitic glosses to the initial section, but the glosses adopt tactics opposite to those of the second and third units of the composition. Instead of questioning the accuracy of astrology, the Stammaim appropriate it by incorporating it into the domain of native knowledge and theology. Astrology does not oppose Scripture but finds its origin and explanation in the Bible. The threatening claims of an epistemology potentially at odds with the Jewish worldview are thereby diffused, at least in part.

This strategy, admittedly in a modest and limited form, shares something with the attempts of cultural appropriation attested among diaspora Jews of the Second Temple period. By claiming that Socrates, Plato, Pythagoras, and other philosophers derived their philosophy from Moses and the Torah, the Alexandrian Jew Aristobolus (c. 180–145 BCE) extended a Jewish pedigree to philosophy and suggested that Hellenistic thought is fully compatible with Scripture, as it derives from the same source.[102] Philo, Josephus, and others made similar claims.[103] Their motivation was not only to depict Jewish heroes as purveyors of arts and culture but to harmonize Hellenistic ideas with Jewish tradition. Ironically, several diaspora Jews claimed that Abraham invented astrology and brought it to the Egyptians.[104] Motivated by similar concerns, our glossator implies that astrology correlates with, and results from, the teachings of Scripture.

In sum, nothing in this unit implies that there is the slightest theological problem with astrology, nor that the discipline is flawed. The opposite is the case: in the spirit of Matthew Tindal's *Christianity as Old as the Creation*, we might summarize our unit as "astrology as old as the creation."

Unit II: Midrash

The second unit begins with an elegant segue, summarizing the perspective of the first unit with a brief version of R. Hanina's position in terms of the general formulation, "Israel has a *mazal*" (3A). It then presents the opposing view ascribed to R. Yohanan with the complementary formula, "Israel has no *mazal*" (3B). Because the positions of both Amoraim seem to have been abstracted from the traditions related in their names—the preceding tradition of R. Hanina (2) and the following tradition of R. Yohanan (3C)—I believe we are dealing with a Stammaitic formulation, and the debate is therefore set in smaller type. These sages neither debated directly nor expressed themselves in these words; rather, the interchange was formu-

lated by the Stammaim on the basis of the traditions ascribed to these sages. Indeed, these types of generalized formulations are typical of the Stammaim and occasionally attributed to later Amoraim, but they are rarely attested in earlier Amoraim such as R. Yohanan and R. Hanina. The Stammaim here have fashioned a neat transition from the astrological traditions of the first unit to the traditions in the second unit, which question astrology, and at the same time they provided the shorthand formulae with which to organize and conceptualize supporting and opposing traditions.

This unit contains two midrashic sources, both found in similar versions elsewhere and presumably selected from a repertoire of relevant traditions. Attributed to R. Yohanan, the first midrashic tradition interprets "the portents of the sky" (Jer 10:2) as astrological signs and takes the verse to limit the efficacy of astrology to the gentiles (3C).[105] On the face of it, this midrash would seem to be a strong anti-astrological position, as R. Yohanan (as construed by the redactors) states peremptorily, "Israel has no *mazal*"; yet the brief midrash offers little evidence as to his meaning, so he could hold a more complex view akin to others presented in the *sugya* which are also categorized as "Israel has no *mazal*."

The midrash itself may simply be a prohibition against Jews engaging in astrology, though not a rejection of the veracity of the science vis-à-vis their fates: "Israel should not be dismayed" about maleficent planetary omens, not because there is no substance to the signs, but because their influence may be averted through pious deeds.[106] At minimum, R. Yohanan concedes that astrology does in fact determine the fates of the gentiles.[107] At the same time, in its current context, the tradition may be taken as a stronger statement against astrology precisely because of the brevity and directness of the formulation.

Complementing R. Yohanan's midrash is an exegetical narrative based on Gen 15:2–5 and attributed to Rav. The exegetical irritant here is the tension between Gen 15:1, where God appears to Abraham "in a vision" (*mahaze*), presumably in a dream or similar state, and Gen 15:5, where God "took him outside," implying that Abraham was fully awake. In the Genesis narrative, Abraham confuses the divine promise of great reward contrasted to his childless condition (15:2) and infers that God must intend Abraham's servant to be his heir (15:3). Rav construes Abraham's confusion to result from astrological calculations. In response to God's insistence that he will indeed sire children (15:4), Abraham discloses the source of his self-knowledge, namely his "astrological sign" (*itstagninut*)—here the exegesis perhaps picks up on God's invitation to Abraham to "count the stars" (15:5). God now answers by directing Abraham to "go out" from astrology, and this re-

solves the exegetical irritant, transforming the spatial direction of the egress to an intellectual one, to "go out" or desist from his speculation, not a physical one. Significantly, God does not reject astrology outright but essentially acknowledges the accuracy of Abraham's appraisal of the heavenly signs, and therefore miraculously alters the celestial landscape by replacing the baleful configuration with a more favorable arrangement. This move is derived from reading *tsedeq* of Isa 41:2 not as "victor," in context probably referring to Cyrus, but as the planet Jupiter, known as *tsedeq* in rabbinic Hebrew (though not in the Bible).[108] In this way "God took him outside" (Gen 15:5) of his fate by exercising sovereignty over the stars and manipulating their powers to fulfill the divine will.

Thus, the sense of "Israel has no *mazal*" in the exegetical narrative is identical to that of the stories of unit III. As with Abraham, so with his descendants: the planets determine the fate of Jews, and astrologers can accurately decipher those signs. That God himself seems to recognize the destructive capacity of Jupiter to the point of intervening to remove the planet to a more propitious location would seem to legitimate the science. At the same time, God may supersede planetary influences, either for his own purposes (Abraham) or as reward for meritorious behavior (the stories). It should also be noted that in the parallel to this tradition at bNed 32a, Rav does not introduce the exegetical narrative with the formulation "How do we know that Israel has no *mazal*," which suggests that here, too, the phrase has been added to his dictum by the redactors. The Stammaim aim to present the views of R. Yohanan and Rav under the same conceptual scheme and to contrast them with the traditions in unit I, and therefore they put the same shorthand formulation in Rav's mouth.[109]

This midrashic unit offers a perspective on astrology opposed to that of the first unit. While the force of R. Yohanan's tradition is difficult to judge, at minimum it insists that Jews need not fret over menacing astrological forecasts, apparently due to providence. Providence is then exemplified in the exegetical midrash, which demonstrates the divine hand at work.

Overall, this *sugya* is carefully structured to provide a spectrum of perspectives regarding astrology. Nowhere does the *sugya* reject astrology or the opinion "Israel has a *mazal*," nor does it arrive at any explicit conclusion. The opinions are presented with the supporting evidence, and the audience is left to arrive at its own conclusions on the basis of the juxtaposition and order of the traditions. Moreover, despite the literal meaning of the abbreviated formulation "Israel has no *mazal*," the primary issue is how and to what degree celestial bodies impact Jews. On one side, we find almost complete acceptance: rabbis copy astrological traditions in their notebooks

and debate the details, much like any other aspect of Torah (sections 1–2). They apply astrological omens to matters of the commandments, attempting to domesticate what could be perceived as alien wisdom. A second opinion limits astrology to gentiles (3). Finally we have four sections offering a synthesis of sorts, all narrative traditions (one exegetical narrative, three sage-stories), presenting astrology as true but incomplete. Jews would do well to "worry" about the insights of the Chaldeans, as did the great R. Akiba (in contrast to R. Yohanan's directive not to be "dismayed"), and even to act on the basis of their warnings, as did Rav Nahman bar Yitshaq's mother. Yet ultimately, astral determinism is trumped by individual providence and the system of rewards and punishments. Astrology is not wrong, but it illuminates only part of the picture.[110]

The careful juxtaposition of these three units in the *sugya* can be understood as the redactors' attempt to synthesize the disparate and conflicting views on astrology which they inherited. I noted above that the immediate Talmudic context does not help us understand the meaning of this "theological *sugya*." However, the Talmud in its entirety provides another, albeit cruder, literary and cultural context. As scholars have noted, a significant concern of the redactors was to systematize and synthesize earlier halakhic traditions, to eliminate contradictions and provide more general and abstract formulations.[111] Here, I suggest, they engage in a similar activity in the aggadic and theological realm, drawing on inconsistent Amoraic traditions about astrology and trying to work out a grand synthesis. And they do an admirable job, presenting both sides of the issue, offering a more general formulation, and concluding with a type of compromise.

In the medieval intellectual milieu, Jews, Christians and Muslims took up anew the debate over astrology. Our *sugya* played a prominent role in the Jewish voice in that debate, and it was often cited by authors who addressed the topic. While the medievals wrote in a philosophical and theological rather than talmudic idiom, many of their views were essentially paraphrases and elaborations of this *sugya*. We may add this attitude to astrology to the elements of Stammaitic culture known from the study of other stories. Here, too, the Stammaitic synthesis had long-lasting influence.

APPENDIX: MANUSCRIPT VARIANTS

The following are the major variants from the base text, Oxford 366, Opp. Add. Fol. 23. I have employed the following manuscripts and printings; see Sokoloff, *DJBA*, 55: Oxford 366, Opp. Add. Fol. 23 = O; Vatican 108 = V; Munich 95 = M;

Geniza fragment, Oxford-Bodl. heb. d. 21 (2676) = G; Soncino family print (1490?) = S; first printed edition (Venice, 1520) = P.

(1A) "He will be strong (*gibara*)." Other mss read "He will be a man (*gevar*)," parallel to the other days. See Sokoloff, *DJBA*, 277, s.v. *gibar*.

(1A) "Rav Ashi." O reads "Rav Asi" for the first gloss, but then "Rav Ashi" for the second, but they were originally one statement; see n. 92. All other mss read "Ashi."

(1A) G reads *resh metivta* ("head of the academy") for "rule." The terms are synonymous.

(1A) "What is the reason? Because light and darkness were created then." This line appears only in P.

(1D) "suspended." V reads "were born" (or perhaps "placed"; *ityalidu*).

(1E) "birds." G omits.

(1F) "Rav Nahman bar Yitshaq." V, M omit "bar Yitshaq."

(1F) "Busy with commandments." G omits "busy with."

(1G) "great." G,V omit.

(1G) "Rabbah bar Rav Sheilah." V reads "Rava." M reads "Rabbah bar Rav."

(2) "Hanina." M, S omit.

(2) "that determines [one's fate.]" G adds "חנ"ך לשצ"ם סימן".

(2A) "revealed." G reads "concealed."

(2B) "luminaries were created." V, M reads "fire was suspended."

(2C) "Mercury." Literally "star of the sun" (*kokhav hama*). V, M omit "of the sun."

(2C) "Scribe." So other mss, which read "*sifra*." O reads "*shufrei*," which could be translated "the best quality of the sun" or even "brilliance of the sun," but I am not sure what this would mean. Mercury in Egyptian and Babylonian mythology was a messenger and the scribe of the gods.

(2D) "hidden." G reads "revealed."

(2E) "plans are frustrated." M omits "are frustrated."

(2F) "charitable . . . . charitable in the Commandments." G reads "busy . . . . busy with the doorways of Torah."

(2G) "Rav Ashi." V omits.

(2G) "a slaughterer" S omits "slaughterer." G adds "or a horseman" (*parasha?*).

(2G) "Rava said, I too was born under Mars." G adds "and am not a slaughterer nor a bloodletter nor one who sheds blood." M reads "Rav" and "and am not a thief nor a slaughterer nor a bloodletter nor circumcisor."

(3B) "The gentiles should be dismayed; Israel should not be dismayed." G reads, "They should be dismayed; you should not be dismayed." M omits.

(4C) "My steward will be my heir." V adds "I have seen my astrological sign and my steward."

(4C) "to have a son." M, S reads "to sire a son."

(4C) "Go out from your astrology." M, S, V add "for Israel has no *mazal*."

(4C) "Standing in the East." G, M add "and is cold" (*vekarir*) and omit "move it."

(4C) "East . . . West." V, M, S, G read "West . . . East."

(5B) "he will die." V = "and he will not come and he will die."

(5C) "If he is a Jew." M, S omit.

(5D) "And discussing it." M, S omit.

(5D) "Ablat arose." V reads "Ablat arose, went to his house."

(5E) "What did you do?" V reads "What is your occupation?"

(5E) "Throw the bread together." V reads "Eat bread together."

(5E) "I said to my companions." V omits. M, S = "I said to them."

(5E) "the bread for him." M, S omit "for him."

(5E) "When I arrived at him." M reads "When I arrived at his house at him."

(5F) "And were saved." V, M, S omit.

(5F) "You did a mitsvah." M reads "You did [an act of] charity" (*tsedaqa*).

(5F) "Shmuel went out to the study-house and expounded." V, S omit "study-house." M omits the entire line.

(5F) "Even from death itself." V, M omit "even."

(6D) "That she entered." V omits. M reads "That she was married."

(6D) "Crack." S reads "wall" (*guda*). M reads "*giha*," perhaps a corruption of "wall" (*guda*.)

(6E) "saying." V, M omit, which renders the entire clause in third person: "I got up, took the portion which you (M: they) gave me, and gave it to him."

(6F) "were saved." V, M omit.

(7A) "Rav Nahman bar Yitshaq." V reads "Rav Nahman."

(7D) "He raised his eyes." M omits.

(7D) "Evil inclination." V, M read "his inclination."

The version of G for section 5 is sufficiently different that it represents a separate textual tradition. (The text becomes fragmentary for sections 6 and 7,)[112] Here is a translation to the best of my understanding:

[A] From [the case of] Shmuel too [we learn that] "Israel has no *mazal*."

[B] For Shmuel and Ablat were sitting. They saw some children going for firewood. Ablat said to Shmuel, "A snake will bite one of them and he will die."

[C] Shmuel said to him, "If he is a Jew, then the matter does not depend on *mazal*, but on merit."

[D] When he came back, Ablat arose, threw off his load, and found there a snake that had been cut and thrown in his pack.

[E] Shmuel said to him, "What did you do?" He said to him, "There was a poor child among us, who had no bread. Every day we take all the morsels and I feed (?; *safina*) them. Today I said to them, "Since he eats from our [food], why should we [cause] embarassment? Let us eat together." [**הוו שקלינן אומצא אומצא וספינא להו האידנא אמינא להו וכי מיכדי מדידן קא אכלא למלן לכסופת נאכלו בהדן כל יומא**]

[F]

[G] Shmuel went out to the study-house and expounded, "*Righteousness (*tsedaqa*) saves from death (Prov 10:2/11:4)*. Not from death itself but from an unusual death."

Chapter 9

Theodicy and Torah (Menahot 29b)

The story of Moses's visit to R. Akiba's academy is among the best-known and most frequently cited rabbinic stories today, and it certainly has received due scholarly attention, including fine studies by Yonah Fraenkel and Nachman Levine.[1] However, there remains a great deal to say about the story, especially regarding the compositional process and its relationship to key biblical and rabbinic intertexts. The story's skeptical stance toward theodicy, an attitude found almost exclusively in late sources, exemplifies another facet of the worldview of the Stammaim. I will discuss this story from seven different perspectives:

(1) context and genre
(2) poetic and aural qualities effects
(3) literary structure
(4) literary analysis and content
(5) biblical resonances
(6) sources and composition and tradition history
(7) Bavli intertexts

The translation follows ms Vatican 120, with variants (none very important) found in the chapter appendix.

> [A] Rav Yehuda said that Rav said: At the time when Moses ascended on high [to receive the Torah] he found the Holy One, Blessed be He, sitting[2] and tying crowns [*qesharim*] to the letters. He said before Him, "Master of the Universe! Who restrains your hand (from giving the Torah immediately, without the crowns)?"

[B] He said to him, "There is a certain man who will live in the future at the end of some generations, and Akiba b. Yosef is his name, who will, in the future derive heaps and heaps of laws from all the tips (*kol kotsin vekotsin*) [of the crowns of the letters]."

[C1] He [Moses] said to him, "Master of the Universe! Show him to me." He said to him, "Turn around."

[C2] He [Moses] went and sat at the end (*sof*) of eighteen rows of students, but he did not understand what they were saying. His strength failed him. When they came to a (certain) matter of law, his [Akiba's] students said to him, "Master, how do you know this?" He said to them, "It is a law [given] to Moses at Sinai." His [Moses's] mind was settled.

[C3] He [Moses] returned and came before the Holy One, blessed be He. He [Moses] said to him, "Master of the Universe! You have such a one in your world and you give the Torah by my hand?"

[C4] He said to him, "Silence! Thus arose in thought before me" (i.e., thus I have decided).

[D1] He [Moses] said before him, "Master of the Universe! You showed me his Torah. Show me his reward." He said to him, "Turn around."

[D2] He [Moses] turned around. He saw them weighing his (Akiba's) flesh in the meat-market.

[D3] He said to him, "Master of the Universe! This is Torah and this is its reward?"

[D4] He said to him, "Silence! Thus arose in thought before me" (i.e., thus I have decided.)

1. Context and genre. The story appears in bMen 29b, connected to mMen 3:7, which rules that "even one letter [of the scrolls placed within the *mezuzah*, if written illegibly or incorrectly] invalidates them (*me'akvan*)." The Talmud follows the Mishna citation with a few traditions concerning proper and invalid forms of letters. It then presents the story, followed by a long unit devoted to other scribal laws of writing parchments and Torah

scrolls (bMen 29a–32b). We thus have an associative, rather than substantive, connection between the story and the proximate Talmudic discussion, by means of the image of God adding crowns to the letters, not through the story's central themes. There are two further associative or mnemonic connections. First, the Mishnah's term "invalidates them" (*me'akvan*) uses the same root as is found in Moses's first question in the story, "who restrains (*me'akev*) your hand."[3] Second, a pair of legal statements that precede the story are attributed to Rav Yehuda in the name of Rav, the putative storyteller. One of these in fact mentions the "tip of a [letter] *yod*," similar to the story's reference to the "tips" of the crowns of letters. So the story has been contextualized with care, though it lacks the thematic connection to proximate Talmudic halakha found in some other cases.[4]

This story does not fall neatly into the two standard genres of rabbinic narratives, in that it features both a biblical figure, Moses, and a rabbinic sage, Rabbi Akiba. The former figure should not appear in a sage-story, while the latter is out of place in an exegetical narrative. Indeed, I know of no other story that bridges the typically impermeable break between the time of the Bible and the time of the sages, between "this time" and "other time,"[5] mythic time and historical time, by including both biblical and rabbinic characters.[6] To do so the story resorts to a form of time travel by transporting Moses into the future to two points in Rabbi Akiba's life. We could categorize this story as science fiction or fantasy or surrealism, if we wished to be somewhat anachronistic.[7] At all events, we have a very unusual story when compared to the typical types of rabbinic stories.

2. Poetic and aural effects. While many Talmudic stories contain repetitions, alliteration, and other such techniques, our text contains a particularly high density of these devices, as has been delineated nicely by Nachman Levine.[8] The opening line (A) offers prominent repetition of the "sh" sound:

*be-**sh**a-a **sh**e-alah Mo**sh**e lamarom, metsa-o lehaqado**sh** barukh hu **sh**e-yo**sh**ev ve-qo**sh**er*[9]

This sound in fact recurs throughout the story.

*halakh veya**sh**av beso**f** **sh**emonah **sh**urot . . . . ta**sh**a**sh** kokho* (C2):[10]

Another example of alliteration:

sof** kama dorot ve'akiva ben yo**sef (B)[11]

The concordance reveals that the name "Akiba" alone appears over 1,300 times in the Bavli, but the full name "Akiba ben Yosef" only about twelve, less than 1 percent. So the appearance of the full name seems to be motivated by the desire to alliterate Yosef with *sof* (end).[12] There is also an intriguing resonance of *me'akev* (restrains) and *akiva*.

We also find a few rhymes:

tashash kokho . . . nityashva da'ato (C2)[13]
shoqlin besaro bemequlin (D2)[14]

There are several words repeated in different lines, sometimes in different linguistic forms, so as to create a type of literary cohesiveness by what we might call "verbal echoes."[15]

(a) The story begins: "in the hour Moses *ascended*" (*alah;* A). It ends with God stating "thus it *ascended* (*alah*/arose) in thought before me" (D4).

(b) Moses finds God "*sitting* (*yoshev*) and tying crowns" (A); He goes and "*sits* (*yoshev*) behind eighteen rows" (C2). When he hears Akiba respond to the students that the law derives from Moses on Sinai "his mind was *settled* (*nityashva*)," from the same root (C2).

(c) God tells Moses that there will be a man "at the *end* (*sof*) of some generations" (B). Then Moses sits "at the end (*sof*) of eighteen rows" (C2).

(d) Moses first asks God "who restrains your hand," (*me'akev al yadekha*; A). And God says "there is a man" (*adam . . . yesh*) (B). When Moses sees Akiba, he asks why, if "there is such a man" (*yesh . . . adam*), that God gives the Torah "by my hand" (*al yadi*; C3).

These alliterations, repetitions, and rhymes almost transform the story into a type of poetry, or at least create a poetic effect when listening; and I think this contributes to the impact of the content, as I will explain below.

3. Literary structure. Apart from these literary features, the story has a neat, two-part structure, which can be diagrammed as follows.[16]

[A] Rav Yehuda said that Rav said: At the time when Moses ascended on high . . .

[B] He said to him, "There is a certain man . . ."

[C1] He [Moses] said to him, "Master of the Universe! Show him to me."	[D1] He [Moses] said before him, "Master of the Universe! You showed me his Torah. Show me his reward."
He said to him, "Turn around."	He said to him, "Turn around."
[C2] He [Moses] went and sat at the end of eighteen rows of students . . .	[D2] He [Moses] turned around. He saw them weighing his (Akiba's) flesh in the meat-market.
[C3] He [Moses] returned and came before the Holy One, blessed be He. He [Moses] said to him, "Master of the Universe! You have such a one in your world and you give the Torah by my hand?"	[D3] He [Moses] said to him, "Master of the Universe! This is Torah and this is its reward?"
[C4] He said to him, "Silence! Thus arose in thought before me."	[D4] He said to him, "Silence! Thus arose in thought before me."

Note the parallel structure in sections C1–C4 and D1–D4, including the repeated language in C1/D1 and C4/D4: Moses twice requests to see R. Akiba, makes two visits to the future, asks God two questions in reaction to his visit, and receives two answers. And the two visits are recounted in much the same words.

Clearly, then, we have a very deliberately organized and formulated story in which the form and content join to express the story's meaning.

4. Literary analysis and content. The story grapples with two critical problems of rabbinic theology—and that it brings these two unrelated issues together in a dense narrative space is one source of the story's power.

The first problem is the gap between the original revelation on Mount Sinai and the contemporary Torah of the rabbis of the Talmudic period. The storytellers are keenly aware that Torah has expanded and developed as each rabbinic generation has added interpretations, legal pronouncements and explanations to the corpus of tradition. The dramatic proliferation of Torah presents a theological difficulty in light of the rabbinic claim that the

Oral Torah was revealed to Moses along with the Written Torah. How can a tradition be part of the *Torat Moshe*, the "Torah of Moses," and at the same time be attributed to later sages? At the root of this issue lurks the problem of legitimacy: if rabbinic traditions originate in a sage, not with the Sinaitic revelation, what makes them authoritative?[17]

The story gives concrete and almost literal expression to this difficulty by depicting Moses in a later rabbinic academy unable to understand the Torah being discussed. In very vivid terms, terms with which I think all rabbis could sympathize, the story imagines Moses sitting in the back of the room, eighteen rows behind the real action, far from the most respected and erudite rabbis. The storyteller has in mind the hierarchically organized Stammaitic academy, where students sit according to their abilities, the most knowledgeable sages towards the front, those knowing less Torah towards the back, a structure we have noted in previous chapters.[18] Since all sages presumably started out, at the beginning of their academic careers, as aspiring students seated in those very back rows, straining to understand the brilliant arguments of the most senior scholars at the front of the room, they all probably felt a certain kinship with the Moses of this story. But for Moses the problem is even more acute than for the beginning student, as his failure to follow the discussion is not a function of youth or inexperience or a need to accumulate the requisite breadth of knowledge, but results from the fact that the "heaps and heaps" of laws he now hears simply do not exist in his own time. With this incredible scene I believe the storytellers display daring honesty: they candidly and explicitly concede that the Torah of their times—the "Torah of Moses" that they know and love—would be unintelligible to Moses himself. And they don't just acknowledge this idea in some theoretical way; they portray it in flesh and blood, so to speak.

The story resolves this theological difficulty by insisting that the expanded and developed Torah of the rabbinic era somehow inheres in the original Torah revealed to Moses. Although Moses cannot understand the subject, R. Akiba asserts that the matter is nonetheless a "law revealed to Moses on Sinai." Now, the text does not use the term "paradox," but I think that it gives expression to that idea. Rabbinic Torah is Moses's Torah, on the one hand, although, on the other, it is also not Moses's Torah. Moses can't understand it, but it devolves from him. The paradox is embodied in the figure of the crowns that God attaches to the letters. Though the crowns are purely ornamental, the storyteller imagines that R. Akiba is able to find meaning in the markings and base new teachings upon them.[19] The crowns,

therefore, are both part of the original revelation, adorning the letters of the Torah that Moses receives, and at the same time constitute the foundation for R. Akiba's "heaps and heaps" of laws. Moses's Torah, in other words, contains both original Torah and potential Torah; and Akiba, together with later rabbis, flesh out the potential of Moses's original.

Yet, this attempt to moderate or rationalize the paradox simply leads to a different paradox, for we could fairly ask, as Moses almost explicitly does, why should God put the crowns there in the first place? Something "restrains God's hand," from giving the Torah without the crowns, without the potentiality, and that something is the rabbis who will expand and interpret Torah in their own way.[20] The crowns are not placed to provide rabbis the opportunity to generate new laws but are a foretoken of the expanded corpus of Torah that God knows the rabbis will formulate. This, I believe, is the sense of the question, "who restrains your hand"—who prevents you? R. Akiba and other rabbis prevent God from giving the Torah without the crowns, due to the nature of their future activity. If we see this story as about the Torah's potential, it is a very odd type of potential, for the potential is a function of the end, not the other way around, and we are back to our paradox.

From another point of view, this paradox devolves from the paradoxical relationship between God and time. For God, who transcends time, the past, present, and future are one.[21] So Akiba and his activity are already present in the transcendent divine purview, even though they do not yet exist for Moses and the Torah as revealed to him. God knows the (future) rabbinic Torah and feels compelled, *me'akev*—"prevented" or "constrained"—as it were, to produce a Torah for Moses that accommodates Akiba. As in all matters of time travel—like the classic question, What if a man travels to the past and kills his grandfather?—we confront a type of paradox. As Fraenkel has observed, the story seems to reflect keen awareness of the temporal paradox in its conflicted use of tenses: "There *is* a certain man, who *will* live in the *future* at the end of some generations, and Akiba b. Yosef *is* his name, who *will*, in the future *derive* . . . (B)." There is a man, now, in God's meta-temporal view, who "will live, in the future, at the end of many generations" (in our time-limited perspective), and Akiba b. Yosef *is* his name, for God, for whom the future is present, "who *will,* in the future, derive heaps and heaps"—the future for Moses, again.[22] From this perspective it makes little sense to see the issue in terms of potential Torah or the expansion and development of Torah, for Akiba's Torah is as present as Moses's, and we can understand the need to add the crowns. But we have simply replaced one paradox with another, and we remain as befuddled as Moses,

who, when momentarily allowed to transcend time, finds himself perplexed by R. Akiba's discussion.

Up to this point, the story has a happy and somewhat playful tone. Moses seems satisfied when Akiba attributes the authority of the law to him, even if he cannot understand the details—"his mind was settled." The students appear to be satisfied with Akiba's claim. I imagine Akiba is satisfied to have parried the students' challenge. And perhaps the audience would have been satisfied to have an important theological issue addressed and grappled with in a fascinating way. With Moses's follow-up question, however, the story shifts to the subject of reward and merit, and inevitably, to the opposite, punishment: *sekhar ve'onesh*, theodicy, a second and quite different theological issue. The content shifts from the happy resolution in the academy to the horrific fate of Akiba, which alludes to the famous rabbinic tradition of Akiba's martyrdom: the Romans flayed him to death with iron combs, tearing off his flesh and then selling it in markets, presumably as food for dogs.[23] As the topic shifts, so the tenor of the story immediately shifts with God's answer, "Silence! Thus arose in thought before me." As opposed to his answer to Moses's first question, the rather detailed explanation of Akiba and his activity, God gives no answer to the second question. Indeed, his response, *shtok*, "silence!," with the sense of "shut up," is mean-spirited and cold. No longer are God and Moses the partners they seem to be at the beginning of the story, with God inviting Moses in to see his work-in-progress. Now they are master and slave, the master owing his slave neither explanation nor courtesy.

Moses's final query as to the justness of Akiba's ultimate fate continues the shift, and the repetition of God's answer—or lack of answer—nuances the image of master and slave into that of a capricious master who coldly watches the death of one slave with no care to explain why to the others. For this reason the ending is chilling. Not only does Moses receive no explanation, but he—and with him, we—are left to wonder whether the same thing could just as easily happen to us.

The inscrutability of theodicy is underscored by the parallel language and structure delineated above—Moses's two questions and God's two responses, C1–C4 versus D1–D4. Despite Akiba's greater mastery of Torah, God gives the Torah through Moses. Therefore merit or reward (*sekhar*) is arbitrary and undeserved. Despite Akiba's greatness in Torah, he endures horrible suffering and a degrading death. Therefore punishment is arbitrary and undeserved. God simply decides and gives no explanation. The story thus fails to provide a satisfactory answer, or really any answer, to the second theological problem it raises, that of theodicy.[24]

The phrase "thus arose in thought before me" supports this reading, as it evokes the context of creation or "pre-creation." According to a widespread rabbinic tradition, various entities "arose in the thought" of God prior to creation, including the Temple, the Patriarchs, the name of the Messiah, repentance, and so forth.[25] That the fates of Moses and R. Akiba "arose in thought" suggests that God determined them prior to creation, and apparently apart from any cause or effect, rhyme or reason, free will or choice. Although not expressed in a philosophical idiom, of course, the story's response to theodicy takes the same tack as the doctrine of predestination: rather than a solution, it circumvents the issue by essentially defining it out of existence.

We have, then, a pointed contrast between the way the story addresses the two theological issues in the two halves of the story. The first half of the story provides an elegant and creative, if paradoxical, resolution to the issue of the expanded rabbinic Torah as opposed to its original Sinaitic form. The second half provides no solution to the problem of theodicy. And consider how different is the depiction of God in the two halves. In the first half God explains to Moses why He adds crowns. And God's reason, the interpretations that Akiba will produce, embodies a deep respect for the human intellect, recognizing that humans participate in a type of partnership with God in producing new Torah.[26] In the second half, we have the unresponsive, apparently arbitrary, deity who commands Moses to shut up.

This leaves us with a second paradox, in that both halves of the story show sides of the same God. How can the caring, thoughtful, respectful God who adds the crowns be the same as the capricious and unresponsive God who silences Moses? And what are we to make of the fact that the very Torah God now reveals to Moses contains myriad biblical and rabbinic passages about the God of justice, who rewards good and punishes evil, to say nothing of the sources about God's mercy, his *rahamim*. Somehow, paradoxically, it is the same God. And this is where I see the literary structure and poetic qualities described above enhancing the content, for the precise, balanced structure and the repeated language unify the halves of the story into a single account, emphasizing that these are two sides of the same God, two moments in the ongoing relationship between Moses (and Moses's people) and the Almighty.

5. Biblical resonances. Menahem Fisch has suggested that this story can be seen as a midrash of sorts on Exodus 33:12–23.[27] I would like to pursue this line of thought in more detail. The biblical verses (with some ellipses) are on the left, the corresponding parts of the story on the right.

(Exodus 33:12–13) Moses said . . . "Pray let me know Your ways, that I may know You and continue in Your favor."	[A] Who restrains your hand? (= why do you attach crowns?) [C1]Show him to me!
(14) And He said, "My face will go and I will lighten your burden.	[C2] God shows Moses Akiba's academy
(17) for you have truly gained My favor and I have singled you out by name."	[C3] You have such a one in this world yet you give the Torah by my hand? (= Moses's merit)
(18) He said, "Oh, let me behold (*hareini*) Your presence!"	[D1] Show me (*hareihu*) his reward.
(19) And He answered, "I will make all My goodness pass before you, and I will proclaim before you the name of the Lord, and I will grant the grace that I will grant and show the compassion that I will show.	[D2] He saw them weighing his (Akiba's) flesh in the meat-market.
(20) "But," He said, "you cannot see My face, for man may not see Me and live."	[C4/D4] Silence! Thus arose in thought before me.
(23) "Then I will take My hand away and you will see My back (*ahorai*); but My face must not be seen."	[C1/D1/D2] Turn around (literally: turn to your back; *hazor le-ahorekha*).

We are not dealing with a true exegetical narrative but with a much looser relationship to the biblical text, yet the two narratives have many elements in common. Both are set on Mount Sinai. In both Moses makes two requests of God: in Exodus Moses asks, first, "Pray let me know your ways, that I may know you" (33:12–13) and second, "Oh, let me behold (*hareini*) Your presence!" (33:18). In the Talmudic story Moses asks first about the crowns and second about merit/reward: why he merits to be the agent of revelation while Akiba suffers such a death. In both accounts Moses's

second request is not answered, or at least not in the form he would like: in the Bible he does not see God's face, and in the Talmud he gets no answer. Both stories thematize the issue of seeing/showing: in the Bible Moses asks to see God's face: *hareini*, "show me / let me behold." In the Talmud Moses twice asks to see Akiba: "Show him to me," *heraihu li*, and "Show me his reward," *heraihu sekharo*. And in both a response to Moses mentions the "back" or "behind": in the Bible God tells Moses he can see God's back (*ahorai*), whereas in the Talmud God thrice tells Moses to "turn around," literally, turn to your back, *hazor le'ahorekha*. In the biblical account God also mentions that He has "singled Moses out," the same idea implicit in Moses's question in the Talmudic story: "You have such a one in your world and yet you give the Torah through me?" that is, you singled me out to receive the Torah. So I think we have grounds to see the story as a type of rabbinic retelling, in which the biblical text has influenced the Talmudic storyteller, providing the skeletal framework or deep structure of the Talmudic account.

Yet there is an additional reason to see the Talmudic story as a transformation of the biblical story. Certain rabbinic midrashim interpreted Moses's questions in the biblical passage as relating to theodicy. The exegetes understood the desire to "know" God's "ways" (*derakhekha*; Exod 33:13) as a request to understand God's way of governing the world, of why some suffer and others prosper. Moreover, when God mentions that He will pass before Moses, in Exod 33:19, He adds, "and I will grant the grace that I will grant and show the compassion that I will show"—an obscure phrase, but one that may have to do with divine mercy and hence with reward and (the forebearing of) punishment.[28] Thus, bBer 7a interprets Exod 33:13, *Pray let me know your ways*, as follows:

> R. Yohanan said in the name of R. Yose: Moses requested three things of the Holy One, Blessed be He, and He [God] granted them to him. . . . [Third,] He requested that [God] make known the ways of the Holy One, Blessed be He, and He [God] granted it to him, as it says, *Pray let me know your ways (Exod 33:12)*. He [Moses] said to Him: "Master of the Universe, Why do some righteous prosper and some righteous suffer, some wicked prosper and some wicked suffer?" He said to him, "Moses: A righteous man who prospers—this is a righteous man, the son of a righteous man. A righteous man who suffers—this is a righteous man, the son of a wicked man."
>
> And He [R. Yose] disagrees with R. Meir. For R. Meir said, "He [God] granted him [Moses] two [of his requests], and denied one, as it says, *And I will bestow*

> *the grace that I will bestow (Exod 33:19)* — even if he is not deserving, *and show the compassion that I will show (Exod 33:19)* — even if he is not deserving."

In this reading of the biblical account, Moses asks God three questions while on Mount Sinai. The third, which appears in the Bible as "Pray let me know your ways" (Exod 33:13), the rabbis interpret as the question of theodicy, why some righteous suffer and some wicked prosper. For R. Yose, God answered this question by pointing to the deeds of the father as a relevant factor. The suffering of the righteous is vicarious punishment for the sins of their fathers, and so forth. For R. Meir, God did not answer Moses's questions but simply stated that He takes mercy on whomever he wishes, despite the fact that the person does not deserve such kindness. By implication, God likewise punishes individuals though they do not deserve it.[29] This response clearly has a great deal in common with our story's perspective: God refuses to answer Moses's question about the fates of the righteous and wicked, stating that He acts with mercy (and, presumably, with cruelty), without connection to an individual's behavior.

Similarly, various rabbinic sources interpret the second question of Exod 33:18, "Oh, let me behold your presence," in terms of theodicy. Some rabbis recoiled from the blatant anthropomorphism and preferred to understand the request to see God's face (and the vision of God's back) as a metaphoric "seeing" or comprehending of God's ways. For example, we find in *Midrash Tehillim* #25:6:

> Thus said Moses to the Holy One, blessed be He: "*Pray let me know your ways (Exod 33:13)*." And He made them known to him, as it says, *He made known his ways to Moses (Ps 103:7)*. [But when Moses said,] "*Oh, let me behold your presence (Exod 33:18)*. Show me the method (*middah*) that you direct the world." He said to him, "You are not able to comprehend my methods (*middot*)."

Moses can understand God's ways, *derakhav*, as attested by another biblical verse but cannot comprehend God's *middot*, his methods. For this midrashic tradition, God denied Moses not a vision of his face but an understanding of the methods by which He conducts the world. In most rabbinic sources, these methods (*middot*) refer to *middat ha-din* and *middat ha-rahamim*, "the attributes of justice and mercy," and therefore to reward and punishment.[30] While *Midrash Tehillim* is a late text, it often provides a clearer expression of ideas present in earlier sources, and may shed light on the underpinnings of the Talmudic story.[31]

Our story may plausibly be seen, along the lines of these traditions, as a retelling of Exod 33:12–23. While the midrashic traditions frame the question in general terms—why the righteous suffer, as in bBer 7a—the story concretizes and personalizes the problem in terms of the specific reward of Moses and suffering of Akiba: why did these individuals receive the fates they did? Why did this righteous man (Moses) prosper and this righteous man (Akiba) suffer? In both the midrashic traditions and our story Moses receives no answer.

Awareness of the biblical framework, I believe, deepens our appreciation of the Talmudic story. The biblical passage embodies the climax of the revelatory experience. There is no more direct experience of the divine in all the Bible than Moses's encounter, in the cleft of the rock, when he asks to see God in all his glory and at least sees God's back as He passes by. That the rabbis translate Moses's request into a desire to comprehend theodicy suggests that this was the most elusive aspect of God's providence and embodied, for them, the climax of the revelatory experience. In the story, then, Moses is not asking about one of the many theological issues that might have concerned the rabbis; rather he is asking about the most critical and confounding question that comes closest at getting at the divine mind. And, that he gets no answer in the rabbinic version—he at least sees God's back in the Bible, whereas in the story he is basically turned back—to me indicates a deep rabbinic frustration over understanding theodicy.

6. Sources and composition.[32] The basic idea of a contrast between Moses and R. Akiba draws on a tradition found in *PRK* 4:7 (72–73).[33]

> [A] For R. Aha said, "Things which were not revealed (*niglu*) to Moses on Sinai were revealed to R. Akiba. *His eyes behold every precious thing (Job 28:10)*—this [applies] to R. Akiba."
>
> [B] R. Yose bar Hanina said: "He [God] hinted to him [Moses] that all the Red Heifers will be annulled, but yours will abide."
>
> [C] R. Aha in the name of R. Yose bar Hanina: "At the time when he [Moses] ascended to the heights of heaven, he heard the voice of the Holy One sitting and busying himself with the passage on the Red Heifer, and citing a law in the name of the sage who stated it: '*R. Eliezer taught: The heifer whose neck is broken must be [not more than] one year old; and the Red Heifer [not more than] two years old (mPar 1:1)*.'"

[D] Moses said before the Holy One, blessed be He: "Master of worlds! Angels and humans are in your power, and yet you sit and state a law in the name of a mortal!"

[E] God said to him, "Moses! A righteous man, in the future (*atid*) will arise in my world, and, in the future (*atid*) will open [his discourse] with the passage on the Red Heifer first, *R. Eliezer taught: The heifer whose neck is broken must be [not more than] one year old (mPar 1:1)*."

[F] Moses said before Him: "Master of worlds! May it be [your] will that he be from my loins." He said to him: "By your life, he will be from your loins." Thus it is written, *The one* (ehad) *was named Eliezer (Exod 18:4)*—the name of that distinguished sage [*meyuhad*] was Eliezer.[34]

This passage appears in a discussion of the reasons, or lack of reasons, for the law of the Red Heifer. It follows a tradition asserting that aspects of these laws, as well as other matters, though concealed in this world, will be clarified in the future (*atidin*). R. Aha supports this idea by claiming that God revealed some additional matters to Akiba that He chose not to disclose to Moses [A]. The textual irritant appears to be that Akiba saw "*every* precious thing" (Job 28:10), even those not previously revealed, and perhaps draws on the next verse, "So that hidden things may be brought to light" (Job 28:11), namely those matters not divulged on Sinai.[35] That Job 28:10–11 refers to Akiba lacks any overt support here, although a tradition in *ARNB* 12 (15a) connects Job 28:9–12 to Akiba on more substantive grounds, and R. Aha here seems to presuppose that link.[36]

R. Aha's tradition [A] clearly bears some similarity to the first half of the story of bMen 29b, the contrast of Moses and Akiba with respect to their knowledge of Torah and the superiority of the latter. However, R. Aha offers no reference to the crowns upon letters nor to the possibility that the Torah of Akiba in some way inheres in the initial revelation to Moses, much less to the surreal depiction of Moses traveling through time to Akiba's academy. His statement certainly harbors a great deal of theological interest, but it differs substantively from the paradoxical idea of our narrative. Indeed, R. Aha does not mean to address the same theological problem of how rabbinic tradition can be the Torah of Moses, revealed on Mount Sinai, and yet constantly expand through the generations. He explains, rather, that impenetrable points of Jewish law will not remain eternally obscure but may be clarified by future revelations. Nonetheless, a root idea of our

story can be detected here, and the Stammaim developed it in creative and interesting ways.

After the brief tradition at [B],[37] the passage continues with a narrative comprising dialogue between Moses and God on Mount Sinai that begins with a phrase most reminiscent of our story, "At the time when he ascended to the heights of heaven" (one manuscript even reads, "At the time when Moses ascended on High"[38]). Here, too, God's activities with Torah (the Oral Torah, rather than the Written) perplex Moses [C], who asks for an explanation [D]. And God responds by mentioning the Torah formulated by a future (*atid*) sage, whom He wishes to honor and accommodate [E]. The Bavli story connects Moses to that sage when Akiba attributes the source of his tradition to Moses, whereas the midrash connects Moses to the sage by having R. Eliezer descend from Moses [F]. We might say that the Bavli constructs Akiba as Moses's intellectual descendant of sorts, the father or progenitor of his tradition, whereas the midrash renders R. Eliezer Moses's physical descendant. By no means do I intend to shift to such a high level of abstraction as to ignore the considerable differences between these sources (R. Eliezer vs. Akiba, the endings, etc.), which I am not sure even qualify as parallels. However, that this dialogue, with its striking similarities [B–F], follows almost directly upon the tradition contrasting Akiba and Moses [A] amounts to firm evidence that the Bavli and midrashic accounts are related, a point not lost on the traditional commentaries.[39] The *PRK* passage, in this or some such form, was reworked by the Bavli Stammaim to construct the more daring, imaginitive, and surreal story of Moses's time traveling.

The storytellers added to this midrashic tradition several passages they borrowed from elsewhere in the Bavli and adapted for their purposes here. The phrase "heaps and heaps of laws from all the tips [of the crowns of letters]" derives from an exegesis of Song 5:11 attributed to Mar Uqba at bEruv 21b:

> *His locks are curled* (qevutsostav taltalim; *Song 5:11*). Rav Hisda said Mar Uqba said: This teaches that one may derive (*lidrosh*) from each and every tip (*kol qots veqots*)[40] heaps and heaps (*tilei tilim*) of laws.

Mar Uqba's statement has typically been understood to refer to the tips of the crowns of letters, in the same manner as our story. If it does, then his *derasha* would imply that the potential laws inhering in the tips of the crowns are an essential property of Torah to which all interpreters may take recourse.[41] For our storyteller, the crowns seem to be exclusive to R. Akiba,

yielding their secrets only to his extraordinary abilities, therefore causing Moses's wonderment and sense of inferiority. The storytellers seem to have adapted Mar Uqba's idea in their portrayal of God adding the crowns to the letters so that R. Akiba could proffer his interpretations.

Shlomo Naeh, however, has recently pointed out that this reading of Mar Uqba is difficult, as we find no interpretations based on the ornamental tips of the crowns of letters in classical rabbinic sources.[42] He therefore proposes understanding *qots,* or *qotsah* as the manuscripts read, not as "tip," but as "section": Mar Uqba means that an interpreter can derive heaps and heaps of laws from every "section" of the Torah—an image that aptly describes rabbinic activity. Because our story has borrowed from Mar Uqba's tradition, Naeh also suggests that the story be understood in this way: that God tells Moses that Akiba can derive heaps of laws from each section of Torah. It is only because the opening line—which is probably borrowed from yet other Bavli passages (see section 7)—mentions crowns that the *qotsin* have been read as the "tips" [of the crowns] rather than "sections." I think Naeh's claims have much to recommend them, given the total lack of rabbinic interpretations of the tips of crowns of letters. Nevertheless, the borrowing of Mar Uqba's tradition and its contextualization by the storytellers in connection with the letters of the Torah makes the standard reading of the story equally possible.

The Bavli storytellers also drew on the well-known account of Akiba's martyrdom, as noted above.[43] There is an even more direct reference to that source in Moses's response, "This is the Torah and this is its reward" [D3]. The Bavli version of the martyrdom concludes (bBer 61b):

> The Angels of the Presence said before the Holy One, Blessed be He, "This is Torah and this is its reward? [He deserved to be] *Among those who die by your hand, O Lord (Ps 17:14)*." He [God] said to them, "*Their portion is life (Ps 17:14)*." A heavenly voice went forth and said, "Happy are you R. Akiba, for you are destined for the world to come."

Here the angels offer the same protest as does the Moses of our story, but God answers them by citing Ps 17:14 "his portion is life," indicating that R. Akiba will live in the world to come, a point explicitly stated by the heavenly voice. This ending raises the issue of theodicy but immediately resolves it in the straightforward way: R. Akiba indeed receives reward for his Torah, and God makes it known both to the angels through his answer to their question and to humans (who cannot speak directly to God) by means of the heavenly voice. The solution is standard rabbinic theology: rewards

and punishments materialize in the next world, hence the suffering of the righteous and flourishing of the wicked in this world should not occasion surprise, and perhaps should be expected. The righteous suffer in this world to pay off their few sins so as to receive consummate reward in the next world, and *vice versa* for the wicked. How sharp the contrast presented by our story! The same objection to R. Akiba's unjust death receives no answer, and the problem of theodicy remains acute. God shuts off the question and provides neither explanation nor comfort. That the same saying, "This is Torah and this is its reward," appears here in the main account of Akiba's death suggests that the storytellers of bMen 29b borrowed directly from bBer 61b.[44] And to brilliant effect: they essentially borrowed the question but not the answer, replacing the standard solution with God's dismissive "Silence! Thus arose in thought before me," thereby turning a reassuring theology into a conundrum. This method of borrowing from and adapting other Bavli sources is a clear sign of Stammaitic composition.

The depiction of an academy with numerous rows of students probably drew on a tradition attributed to R. Yohanan in bHul 137b:

> I remember that when I sat before Rabbi [Yehuda HaNasi], seventeen rows behind Rav, sparks of fire flew from the mouth of Rabbi, and I could not understand what they were saying.

While the story appears in Hebrew and this passage in Aramaic, the description of Moses's inability to "understand what they were saying" [C2] is almost a verbatim translation of the final phrase here "could not understand what they were saying," with a simple shift from the first person to the third person.[45] Moreover, this situation of a student sitting in the back rows not understanding the leading sages far in front is precisely the predicament of the Moses of the story.[46] I would conjecture that the storytellers increased the number of rows from seventeen to eighteen as a sign of respect for R. Akiba's academy, which they assumed would have been greater and larger than that of Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi. Let me add that even if the storytellers did not borrow directly from this passage, the depiction of an academy with multiple rows of students is an unambiguous marker of Stammaitic composition, patterned on the well-populated and highly structured institution of the post-Amoraic era.[47] When they imagined R. Akiba debating with his students, the Stammaim pictured them within the institutionalized academy of their times.

Finally, the Stammaitic provenance of the story can also be determined by another aspect of its content (besides the depiction of the academy),

namely, the story's failed theodicy, which is a function in part of the reworking of the R. Akiva tradition as noted above. We find several Bavli *sugyot* that likewise challenge the standard rabbinic explanation of suffering as punishment for sin ("reward and punishment," *sekhar ve'onesh*), as argued by Yaakov Elman in his aptly titled "Righteousness as Its Own Reward: An Inquiry into the Theologies of the Stam."[48] Elman points to a number of "theological" *sugyot* that accept the notion that the righteous sometimes suffer *not* because of their own sin but for a variety of other reasons, including the sin of Adam (literally, "the urging of the snake," bShab 55a–b), that "danger was established" (bQid 39b), and "chastisements of love," namely gratuitous suffering to increase reward in the next world (bBer 5a). Elman traces this notion to the fourth century Amora Rava, from whom it was inherited by the Stammaim; such ideas are completely wanting in Palestinian sources. Our story proves even more radical in providing no real solution to the problem (other than that God simply decided); nevertheless, it shares with the Stammaitic passages collected by Elman the view that the suffering of the righteous is sometimes undeserved. The theological content thus points to a Stammaitic dating.

In sum, the story evinces several examples of borrowing and reworking of earlier sources that characterize Stammaitic narratives. These compositional techniques are evident in the reworking of the *PRK* tradition (though the precise steps in this process are not exactly clear) and the adaptation of the Bavli traditions of Mar Uqba, R. Yohanan, and of Akiba's martyrdom.

7. Bavli intertexts. Let me conclude with mention of two Bavli intertexts that I believe enhance our appreciation of the uniqueness of this story.[49] The opening formula, "At the time when Moses ascended on high," in fact begins four other stories that imagine conversations between Moses and God, sometimes with the angels too, when Moses received the Torah up on Mount Sinai.[50] One of these stories begins in almost identical fashion to ours, then takes quite a different tack (bShab 89a).[51]

> At the time when Moses ascended on high he found the Holy One, blessed be He, tying crowns to letters <and Moses kept silent>. He [God] said to him: "Moses, is there no peace in your land?" (I.e., why do you not greet me and say, "Peace / Shalom?" Is there no peace where you are from?) He said before Him, "Should a slave extend greetings to his Master?" (Rather, a slave should wait until spoken to.) He [God] said to him, "You should have helped me" (by wishing me success in my work). Immediately he [Moses] said, *"And now, let the Lord's strength be great" (Num 14:17)*.

Here, too, Moses ascends Mount Sinai and finds God attaching crowns to letters; but he says nothing, explaining, when God asks after his silence, that a lowly slave has no business initiating conversation with the Almighty. A version in a late midrash reads explicitly, "and Moses kept silent," which I have set in the angled brackets above.[52] From God's response—"you should have helped me"—we learn that God has a much higher opinion of Moses than Moses has of himself, and Moses takes the message to heart, assisting, as it were, in the production of the Torah. This theme of Moses's great stature and God's respect for Moses runs through the other three stories in bShabbat. In our story, however, we have a substantially different depiction of Moses and of God's relationship to him. The first half of the story depicts Moses as somewhat simple, perhaps naïve, unable to understand the complex discussions of Torah. He stands in contrast with the great R. Akiba and admits his inferiority. And in the second half of the story God tells Moses to keep silent, diametrically opposite to the tradition in bShabbat, where God objects to Moses's silence and encourages him to speak. In our story Moses *is* that slave who has no business speaking before the Master, the very idea that the tradition in bShabbat rejects. In this case the evidence is not sufficient to claim that our story borrowed directly from the story in bShabbat or *vice versa*, yet I believe that our audience would take note of the contrast and sense once more the highly unusual nature of the story.[53]

A second account of Moses finding God when "he ascended on High" likewise offers a fascinating contrast with our story (bSanh 111a–b):

> [A] When Moses ascended on high he found the Holy One, blessed be He, sitting and writing, *Slow to anger (Exod 34:6)*. He [Moses] said before Him, "Master of the world! *Slow to anger* at the righteous?" He said to him, "Even at the wicked." He [Moses] said to him, "*Let the wicked perish (Ps 37:20)*!" He said to him, "Presently you will see that you will need it."
>
> [B] When Israel sinned, He [God] said to him, "Did you not say to me, '*Slow to anger* at the righteous?'" He [Moses] said before him, "Master of the World! And did you not say to me, 'Even at the wicked'?"
>
> [C] And thus it is written, *"Now I pray let my Lord's forebearance be great, as You have declared: The Lord! Slow to anger" (Num 14:17–18)*.[54]

A beautiful exgetical narrative, this account offers a classic reversal—both God and Moses quoting the other's words back to him. In the manner of

many rabbinic stories, it contrasts a superficial view of reality or moral outlook, here voiced by Moses, with a deeper insight, here articulated by God and subsequently discovered by Moses through his experience. After the spies sin, Moses decides he would rather that God be "slow to anger" toward his wicked flock too [B], as God predicted that Moses would require [A]. The exegetical irritant is apparently the phrase "as You have declared," in Num 14:17: Moses emphasizes that *You*, God, stated that "slow to anger" be directed to the wicked too, that is, you alone, and he prays that "*now*" God will display that forebearance/power (*koah*). Moreover, the potential redundancy and theological difficulty of Moses quoting God's words of Exod 34:6 back to Him in Num 14:17—did he have to remind God of what He said?—is diffused by turning Moses's statement into a revision of his own views.

Here again a story portrays God, and to a certain extent Moses, in a manner that stands in tension with that of Menahot 29b: God resists meting out justice upon the wicked, insisting on mercy instead, while Moses quickly retreats from a stance that would call for just punishment for sin. How distant from the God who apparently punishes the righteous R. Akiba without explanation.

In sum, this text, in my opinion, presents an honest expression of the rabbinic bafflement at the problem of theodicy. The same storytellers who can offer some insight into the theological conundrum of the ever-expanding rabbinic Torah as compared to the Torah revealed to Moses can make no sense of theodicy. They don't give us facile solutions or stock answers of the sort I imagine they would have preached to the public. Here I feel we are privy to the dark worries and inner theological crises that the Stammaim shared exclusively with their peers. In fact, the poetic qualities noted above—the alliterations, rhymes, and repetitions—give the sense of a liturgical composition or prayer of sorts. I would even venture to suggest that the story be seen as a type of protest, as we find in some of the Psalms[55]; perhaps the Stammaim are sharing with God their dismay at the suffering of the righteous. They don't like it, and they can't explain it, and they express their perplexity in this fascinating narrative. In this way they provide generations of future rabbis and rabbinical students a way to confront, ponder, and grapple with the problem of theodicy as they strive to interpret this story among the other rabbinic traditions that bear on the same issue.

APPENDIX: MANUSCRIPT VARIANTS

Base text according to ms Vatican 120 = V^{10}. Variants are brought from the following manuscripts: Munich 95 = M; Paris AIU 147A = P^2. Vatican 118 = V^8; first printing (Venice, 1520) = P.

(A): "sitting and tying crowns": V^{10} omits "sitting." Restored on the basis of all other mss.

(B): "will live in the future." M omits "in the future".

(B): "from all the tips." V^{10} reads *al kol qotsin veqotsin,* while M, P^2, P read *al kol qots veqots*, the plural vs. the singular. I take these formulations to be equivalent. V^8 reads *al kol qots qotsets veqotsets*. I am not sure how to take this reading.

(C2): "eighteen." P = "eight."

(C2): "His strength failed him." M = "Moses's strength failed him."

(C2): "a matter of law" (*davar halakha*): M, P^2, V^8 omit "law." P reads "certain matter" (*davar ehad*).

(C2): "Master." V^8 omits.

(C2): "His mind was settled." M adds "When Moses heard this, his mind." V^8 omits "mind."

(C3): "He returned and came." V^8 omits "returned."

(D1): "His reward." V^8 = "his praise."

(D1): "Turn around." F omits "around."

(D3): V^{10} omits "Master of the Universe." Restored on the basis of other mss.

Chapter 10

Conclusion

These eight studies contribute to our understanding of the narrative art of Bavli stories, the culture of the Stammaitic academy, and the compositional techniques of the Stammaitic storytellers. Here I will draw together relevant material from all chapters to present a more comprehensive account of each of these topics. The numbers in square brackets refer to the chapter of this book from which the example is taken. I will deal briefly with topics that primarily reinforce the findings of my previous books and expand on refinements and new directions.

Narrative Art

The poetics of Bavli stories include a diverse array of techniques and literary devices. These include:

wordplay or paronomasia
symbolic character names
irony
keywords and repetitions
dialogue
interior monologue
order
structure

Wordplay or paronomasia. When Honi falls into a seventy-year sleep (*shinta*), a mound of earth (*shunita*) covers him [4]. Abdan makes fun of R. Ishmael b. R. Yose's weight (*yuqra*) instead of showing him honor (*yeqara*) [2].

Symbolic character names. The name Abdan, "lost one," from the root *a-b-d*, relates to his horrible demise [2]. The name Ilfa, also meaning boat or ship, clearly plays on the desperate challenge that this sage issues while suspending himself on the sailyard of a ship [3].

Irony. Jesus ironically rejects R. Joshua b. Perahia's solicitation to repent because of the tradition he learned from the same R. Joshua [7]. R. Akiba's daughter is saved from death by the pins of her wedding crown, which mark her for death according to the prediction of the astrologers [8].

Keywords and repetitions. The story of disciples visiting their masters makes copious use of the keyword or key word/root *q-b-l*: the students visit (*lehaqbil*) their masters, the homily mentions receiving a reward (*leqabel sekhar*), R. Eliezer commands R. Yose b. Dormasqit to "receive (*qabbel*)" his eye, and comments that he has "received (*mequblani*)" a tradition from his teachers [6].

Repetition is particularly prominent in series of stories. The stories of Gehazi and Jesus repeat phrases in both the narration and the dialogue [7]. The series of three stories of astrologers' predictions likewise employ common phrasing and repeated introductory and concluding lines [8]. Similarly, two episodes within a single story frequently involve repetition. Moses's two visits to points in R. Akiba's life and the two accompanying dialogues with God share much in common [9]. The repeated language invites comparison and contrast among the stories of the series or between parts of a single story, which helps communicate the lessons of the storytellers.

The story of Gamaliel includes several structural units with tripartite repetitions, as is typical of oral stories [5, sections d, e, n].

Dialogue. Almost all of the stories are rich in dialogue, as we would expect from the oral culture of the sages. The story of the disciples visiting their masters in fact consists almost entirely of dialogue [6]. Several stories feature a threefold interchange, a nice parallel to the standard series of three objections and responses in halakhic *sugyot*. Abdan and R. Ishmael b. R. Yose exchange a particularly heated series of responses, where each answers a question with a question [2]. Rabban Yehoshua's wife proffers three objections to his becoming head of the academy, which he answers in turn [5].

Interior monologue. Bavli stories regularly present thought as speech, introducing it with the standard "he said" (*amar*) used for dialogue. In these contexts "he said" should be understood as "he thought," or "he said

to himself," that is, as interior monologue. In this manner, the narrator reports of R. Yohanan, upon realizing that he alone heard the angelic conversation: "He said [to himself], 'This means that I am the one with a propitious time [3].'" Upon receiving the message from Jerusalem, Joshua b. Perahia "said [to himself], 'This means there is peace'" [7]. We would say, "Joshua b. Perahia *thought* . . . ."[1] The heavy use of interior monologue contributes to the dialogical and dramatic quality of the stories.

Order. In many cases we find deviations from the strict temporal order, most often through flashbacks, such that events that occur later in the story are recounted earlier in the text. The sins of Gehazi and Jesus—to which they allude in their dialogues with their masters as the reason they cannot repent—are mentioned after those conversations [7]. Two stories describe the protagonists' surviving despite fatal predictions by the astrologers, and subsequently reporting the meritorious deeds they had performed [8]. Moses twice views episodes in the life of R. Akiba in what amount to flashforwards, as the primary time frame of the story takes place on Mount Sinai when Moses received the Torah [9].

Structure. All the stories display tight structures or structural units, usually distinguished through the use of repeated language or elements of the plot. While these structures primarily serve mnemonic purposes by facilitating the memorization and transmission of the story, they simultaneously have a literary function in creating relationships between its parts. The story of Abdan divides into four sections, three introduced by repeated phrasing ("So-and-so arrived"), while two involve similar events (the sage's difficulty reaching his seat, the citation of the father's teaching) [2]. The two visits of Moses to R. Akiba's time that divide the story into two parts are recounted with similar dialogue [9]. Texts composed of series of stories tend to use similar structures for each story—sometimes with minor variations—to facilitate comparison and contrast [6, 7, 8].

The Culture of the Stammaitic Academy

These stories vividly illustrate the picture of the academy set out in *The Culture of the Babylonian Talmud*. R. Ishmael b. R. Yose's difficulty getting to his seat and the notion of "trampling on the heads of the holy people," points to a heavily populated academy [2]. Numerous sages and students seem to be sitting on the floor, packed together tightly. That the eminent R. Ishmael has a set place implies a hierarchical arrangement with specific

sites reserved for the more eminent sages. That Moses sits in the rear of the academy, eighteen rows back from R. Akiba, suggests a similar arrangement and clarifies that the weakest students belong at the back [9].

Abdan's interchange with R. Ishmael b. R. Yose provides a colorful image of the types of fast-paced dialectical argumentation that characterized the Stammaitic academy, as well as its potential to degenerate into insults [2]. That attempted humiliation of R. Ishmael b. R. Yose and the subsequent disastrous humiliation of Abdan reflects the honor-shame culture of the academy in the starkest manner. Rabban Gamaliel's humiliation of R. Yehoshua in front of the entire academy provokes such outrage that the sages rebel [5]. In both of these cases we sense how the proceedings in a large-scale assembly make for a public environment where the dangers of shame are most acute. In a hyperbolic expression of this idea, the lack of honor shown to Honi upon his return to the academy causes him to feel such a sense of shame as to wish for death [4].

Several of these stories portray the (putative) heads of the academy (R. Yehuda HaNasi, Rabban Gamaliel, R. Akiba) as facing the sages of the academy and presiding over the academic sessions in a manner similar to that depicted in Geonic sources. However, these depictions of the head of the academy vary in many respects and provide tantalizing hints as to the nature of this office. The students' response to Ilfa that had he not left the academy he, rather than R. Yohanan, would have become its head, suggests that the office was a meritocracy based on academic knowledge or ability [3]. Similarly, Akiba is depicted as the most brilliant and knowledgeable sage, even greater than Moses, and presumably for that he reason is head of the academy [9]; yet the criteria by which the sages nominate R. Eleazar b. Azariah to replace Rabban Gamaliel include wealth and ancestral merit, among the characteristics of Persian nobility [5]. The allusion to Rabban Gamaliel's servants, who will trouble the sages, may be another such reflex of an aristocratic image. That the sages ultimately cannot replace Rabban Gamaliel and the use of heavy priestly imagery may even be indications that the office exhibited some dynastic or oligarchic tendencies, as in later Geonic times.[2] These stories, then, seem to reflect a tension between knowledge of Torah and genealogy (*yihus*) as the criteria for academic leadership.

Particularly interesting is the curious association of astrology with the head of the academy. The angels spare R. Yohanan because of his favorable horoscope, apparently an indication that he will have great academic success or even become head of the academy [3]. Similarly, a tradition refers to Rav Ashi's horoscope in conjunction with his becoming head of the academy [8]. We noted other traditions that seem to make similar connections [3].[3]

Clearly this topic requires more detailed study, but these may be indications that horoscopes were also used as a justification or one of the criteria for academic leadership, and this too may be due to Sassanian influence.

A moderate belief in astrology in any case can be added to our picture of the Stammaitic worldview. Both the series of three stories of inexact astrological predictions and the larger *sugya* in which they are found communicate this idea with the Stammaitic formulation "Israel has no *mazal*" [8]. This expression means that astrology is fundamentally valid, all things being equal, but astral "determinism" can be superseded by divine intervention, generally in response to good deeds or sins. On the other hand, a deep challenge or skepticism toward traditional rabbinic theodicy, a cornerstone of covenantal theology, emerges from God's response to Moses's question about R. Akiba's fate [9]. The narrative offers no answer to the question of why the righteous suffer, depicting God in a cruel manner as if disinterested in justice. These perspectives on astrology and theodicy seem to have roots in the Amoraic period and come to fuller expression in Stammaitic sources. A more striking case of a Stammaitic ideological innovation is the view of legal indeterminism in the Bavli version of R. Eleazar b. Azariah's homily [6]. The paradoxical claim that conflicting legal rulings are all valid, all originating in divine revelation, has no precedent in earlier Amoraic or Tannaitic literature.

Composition

These studies have tried to establish that the Stammaim substantially reworked narrative traditions and essentially authored many of the stories now found in the Bavli. Some changes, to be sure, cannot definitively be assigned to the Stammaim and could have occurred during the process of Amoraic transmission. But, in many cases we find solid evidence of Stammaitic intervention in numerous passages of the story. Given the extent of the demonstrable Stammaitic contribution, I would argue that similar changes of uncertain provenance can presumptively be attributed to the Stammaim, and therefore we can also attribute many Bavli stories to them. Here follows a taxonomy of the primary methods of Stammaitic composition.

Borrowing

The major compositional technique employed by the Stammaim is borrowing and adapting material from other BT sources. In the most extreme cases,

such as the story of Abdan, almost the entire text is cobbled together from other passages [2]. But almost all the stories studied here exhibit some instances of borrowing. A saying elsewhere ascribed to Rava was placed in the mouth of Rabban Gamaliel [5]. Another saying of Rava was transferred and abbreviated to conclude the story of Honi [4]. The description of R. Akiba deriving "heaps and heaps of laws" from the letters of the Torah was taken from an Amoraic tradition found in Tractate Eruvin, while the concluding reference to R. Akiba's martyrdom draws on the primary account of his death in Tractate Berakhot [9]. The Bavli attributed R. Joshua b. Perahia's flight into Egypt to the persecution imposed by King Yannai recounted in another passage [7]. In some cases the Stammaim borrowed the source but failed to adapt it smoothly, creating awkward and difficult phrasing. The conclusion to two stories of astrologers, "*Righteousness (*tsedaqa*) saves from death (Prov 10:2/11:4)*; not [only] from an unusual death but [even] from death itself," does not read well, and makes far better sense in its original form and context [8]. This process is one of the reasons the Bavli versions of narratives are generally longer and more developed than the parallels found in Palestinian sources, when such parallels exist. The redactors supplemented and expanded the earlier versions by adding and integrating other passages.[4]

This type of borrowing and adaptation points clearly to the Stammaim, for two main reasons. First, Amoraim did not formulate their dicta by borrowing from earlier sources in this way. They might employ stock phrases and express themselves with similar terminology and phraseology, but they did not make wholesale transfers of material from elsewhere. Second, this type of composition is exactly what we find in Stammaitic legal *sugyot*. The Stammaim transferred Amoraic dicta and even extended interchanges from one location to another, sometimes adapting them to the needs of the new passage. Because the compositional methods we have documented among stories match attested Stammaitic methods of legal composition, the nonlegal passages should be attributed to them, too.

In most of these cases the Stammaim borrowed from sources found elsewhere in the Bavli. Again, as with legal materials, they constructed more intricate and developed *sugyot* out of briefer traditions of their predecessors by drawing on other Bavli passages. However, they seem also to have integrated sources from other compilations, such as the sins of Gehazi based on a passage from mAvot [6], and the tradition comparing the revelations of Moses and Akiba, found in *Pesiqta deRav Kahana* [9]. The story of Rabban Gamaliel integrates several Mishnaic passages [5].

Patterning and Duplication

Patterning. The story of Rabban Gamaliel's debate with R. Yehoshua over the firstling, wherein the entire plot and extended sequence of dialogue is "patterned" on another source, provides a "smoking gun" of Stammaitic composition. By "patterned" I mean that aspects of the new story were generated by borrowing from and adapting a lengthy passage from an extant story, resulting in a similar pattern or structure. As opposed to the simple borrowing described above, in which a single element is taken from the source, in "patterning" a lengthy section or series of passages are borrowed together. This type of creativity is unattested among Amoraim to the best of my knowledge. The compositional process, however, parallels that found in some Stammaitic legal *sugyot*, wherein extended series of objections and responses are transferred and adapted from one *sugya* to another.

Another type of patterning was identified in the chapters that studied series of stories. The parallel seven-part structures and repeated introductory and concluding phrases of two stories of astrological predictions indicate that one of them was patterned on the other [8]. That the first story appeared in a different form in the Yerushalmi suggests that the storytellers reworked it on the basis of the second story. The redactional setting of the stories—that they follow one another in a carefully structured *sugya*—was accomplished by the Stammaim, who placed the traditions in this order; hence, the changes should be attributed to them. Moreover, the introductory lines contain the expression "Israel has no *mazal*," attested only among the Stammaim and also used to organize traditions within the *sugya*. Similarly, the story of R. Joshua b. Perahia and Jesus is clearly patterned on the preceding story of Elisha and Gehazi, and even borrows some of the dialogue verbatim [7]. The storytellers substantially revised a story of an anonymous disciple and his master found elsewhere in the Yerushalmi, and recontextualized it in the Bavli. Here too, because the Stammaim are responsible for the redactional setting, that is, for juxtaposing it with the story of Elisha and Gehazi, it stands to reason that they are responsible for the reworking, for patterning its structure and dialogue on that story. In these cases of story-cycles, the "patterned" story obviously appears in close proximity to its source, although in other cases the derivative story will be found elsewhere in the Talmud.

Summary patterning. In some cases—although not attested in our set of stories—the Bavli claims that a similar experience happened to another

character. After the story of the marriage of R. Akiba and his years of study in the academy, the narrator continues: "The daughter of R. Akiba *did the same* for Ben Azai. Thus runs the proverb, 'Ewe follows ewe. As the ways of the mother so are the ways of the daughter'" (bKet 63a).[5] Exactly what "did the same" means is not completely clear. Presumably the storyteller intends that she stipulated that Ben Azai leave home and study in the academy for many years. Does he also mean that she betrothed Ben Azai in secret and then kissed his feet upon his return? At all events, the redactors generated a second story patterned on the first, though not fully narrated, in this economical manner. The intended function of such "summary patterning" is an interesting question. Here the redactors probably wanted to clarify that R. Akiba's wife did not become infertile, despite the twenty-four year separation, as did some of the wives of the preceding stories. In addition, Boyarin notes how the redactors "solve" the problem of Ben Azai, who elsewhere refuses to marry because of his love for Torah. By marrying the daughter of R. Akiba, who imitated her mother, Ben Azai could enjoy his monklike study without the celibacy that clashes with rabbinic norms.[6] Similarly, after the story of R. Eleazar b. R Shimon, the Talmud continues: "And also R. Ishmael b. R. Yose—*a similar event happened to him*. Elijah came upon him and said to him, 'How long will you deliver the people of our God for execution?'" (bBM 83b–84a). Apparently we are to understand that R. Ishmael b. R. Yose also arrested thieves and handed them over to the authorities.[7] But the question remains as to how much of the "similar event" transpired: did he also encounter a governmental official who instructed him how to identify criminals?[8] The narrative function here would seem to be akin to that of story-cycles: by producing two stories with similar but slightly varied trajectories, the storytellers invite comparison and contrast and stimulate thought on the issue.

Weak patterning. A weaker form of "patterning," involves the borrowing of several disparate elements from a given story to expand a second story, resulting in common locutions and motifs though not as clear an overall pattern. Shamma Friedman briefly called attention to this process in his groundbreaking article "La'aggada hahistorit batalmud habavli [On the Historical Aggada of the Babylonian Talmud]". He noted that the extended narrative complex of bBM 84a–86a, the subject of his study, borrowed several elements from the story of Rabbi Banaa of bBB 58a, elements that did not appear in the Palestinian parallels.[9] Friedman comments, "And this is a general phenomenon, that the elements of the expansion are found concentrated in a different place, as if that very chapter and that same *sugya* were

open before the redactor of the Talmud (*ba'al hagemara*), and he copiously borrowed elements of language and content."[10] Here the borrowed elements are integrated in different places in the secondary location and used more to supplement the plot than to generate the core story. An example from our set of stories is the expansion of the story of Jesus and R. Joshua b. Perahia with elements from the story of King Yannai of bBer 48a. References to Yannai's having killed the rabbis, the hiding of Shimon b. Shetah (which appears in some mss.), and the mention of showing honor seem to have been borrowed by the Stammaim who transformed and expanded an earlier story of the master and disciple [7].

Duplication. A related process of Stammaitic composition can be called duplication.[11] This occurs when storytellers draw on elements of the story itself to generate additional stages in a plot or dialogue, thus producing 'doublets." Narrative elements that occur once in the Palestinian version accordingly appear twice in the reworked BT account. An example of this phenomenon is the two petitions employing priestly imagery and arguing that Rabban Gamaliel be restored to his office [5]:

yBer 4:1, 7c–d	bBer 28a
	[l] . . . R. Yehoshua sent [word] to the academy, "Let he who wears the robe wear the robe. Should one who does not wear the robe say to one who wears the robe, 'Take off your robe and I will wear it?'"
He said to him [R. Eleazar b. Azariah], "Let a sprinkler, the son of a sprinkler, sprinkle. Should he who is neither a sprinkler nor the son of a sprinkler say to a sprinkler, the son of a sprinkler, your water is cave-water and your ashes are common ashes?"	[m] R. Yehoshua went and knocked on the door. He said, "Let a sprinkler, the son of a sprinkler, sprinkle. Should he who is neither a sprinkler nor the son of a sprinkler say to a sprinkler, the son of a sprinkler, your water is cave-water and your ashes are common ashes?"

The "sprinkler" argument appears almost verbatim in the Bavli, but in the Bavli the plot has been expanded by the addition of a second stage to the

process of reinstating Rabban Gamaliel. To provide dialogue for that event, the storytellers composed a second message that mentions the priestly robe (Lev 6:3), parallel to the priestly "sprinkler" and clearly patterned on the phrasing of the "sprinkler" speech. Doublets like these result from internal, rather than external, "patterning": a section of the story itself is the source upon which the second element is generated.

Shamma Friedman, however, has questioned whether this kind of duplication is necessarily the work of the Bavli redactors.[12] He suggests that narrative duplication is found already in the Yerushalmi and is thus of Amoraic provenance. In his astute discussion, Friedman cites the following example from bBer 62b, where two almost identical accounts appear side by side:

> It was taught: R. Akiba said: "Once I entered into a privy after R. Yehoshua, and I learned three things from him. I learned that one does not defecate east and west but north and south. And I learned that one does not uncover oneself standing but rather sitting. And I learned that one does not wipe with the right hand but with the left." Ben Azzai said to him: "You behaved so insolently towards your master?" He said to him: "It is [a matter of] Torah, and I needed to learn [it.]"

> It was taught: Ben Azai said: "Once I entered into a privy after R. Akiba, and I learned three things from him. I learned that one does not defecate east and west but north and south. And I learned that one does not uncover oneself standing but rather sitting. And I learned that one does not wipe with the right hand but with the left." R. Yehuda said to him: "You behaved so insolently towards your master?" He said to him: "It is [a matter of] Torah, and I needed to learn [it.]"

Friedman argues that this cannot be a case of reworking and duplication by the BT redactors because the two stories already appear together in the Yerushalmi. In yBer 9:5, 14c (75) we find.

> R. Akiba said: "I entered after R. Yehoshua to see him act." They said to him, "What did you see?" He said to them, "I saw him sitting with his side to the west, and he did not uncover [himself] until he had sat down, and he did not sit down until he had rubbed [the stones],[13] and he did not wipe with his right hand but with his left."

> Also R. Shimon b. Yohai would say thusly: "I entered after R. Akiba to see him act." They said to him, "What did you see?" etc.

As is common in the PT (and attested in the BT), the scribe abbreviated the passage because the continuation was identical to the preceding material. Friedman argues that it strains credulity to believe that the same event occurred twice in precisely the same way. One anecdote was duplicated and told of different sages, once about R. Akiba the student and R. Yehoshua the master, once about R. Akiba the master and R. Shimon b. Yohai the student. Thus, we have narrative duplication in the PT that was transmitted to Babylonia and clearly cannot be the work of the BT redactors.[14]

However, this kind of duplication differs from the cases of patterning and duplication described above.[15] These two stories of students observing their masters are a case of the identical story told about a different character or characters. It could just as easily be framed as: "Once R. Akiba, and some say Rabban Shimon bar Yohai, said: I entered after my master . . . ." This differs little in principle from halakhic traditions ascribed to one rabbi or another (R. So-and-so, and some say R. So-and-so, said . . .). True, according to such halakhic ascriptions the statement was said only once, and there is a disagreement among transmitters as to which sage actually articulated the tradition, whereas according to the PT narrative *sugya* the same event happened twice. But, from a critical perspective, clearly the same event did not happen twice; rather, different tradents told the story about different subjects. There was a difference of opinion among tradents as to which sage actually experienced the events, though the redactors of the PT preserved both versions.

This kind of duplication is primarily a function of difficulties in the processes of memorization and transmission such that confusion as to the identity of tradents or subjects arose. It is unlike the cases of duplication described above in which the storytellers create a new element of a story on the basis of the plot or dialogue, with the goal of expanding that same story. Friedman's example is also unlike cases of patterning such as the conflict over the firstling, in which the content of the secondary story differs substantially from its source [5]. Here the original story about a dispute over prayer was transformed into a different story involving a dispute over the firstling, not simply by telling it about different characters but by adapting it to different circumstances and altering the dialogue appropriately. We cannot attribute the duplication to confusion in the processes of transmission or memorization that produced two versions of the same tradition. Rather the duplication results from a creative endeavor, the deliberate transfer and patterned adaptation of material. "Summary patterning" has something in common with Friedman's example, but in summary patterning the second

story is not narrated at all but simply produced through the assertion of the storyteller. This process also does not result from difficulties in transmission or mnemonics but through the creative labors of the redactors.[16] Thus, we find various kinds of patterning and duplication of narrative traditions that must be distinguished and studied.

Pseudo-*meimrot*

Storytellers sometimes integrate Amoraic dicta (*meimrot*), either as secondary narration of portions of the plot or as non-narrative comments that relate to aspects of the story. These comments, of course, give the impression that the story was known in Amoraic times. However, in many cases these dicta were transferred and adapted from elsewhere by the redactors, a phenomenon also attested in halakhic *sugyot*. For example, we find two Amoraic comments within the story of Abdan [2]. Both dicta, however, appear elsewhere in the BT and were borrowed by the redactors to reflect on Abdan's fate in similar ways. The story of Honi likewise culminates with a dictum of Rava, "Thus people say, 'Either fellowship or death.'" In fact, this comment appears elsewhere regarding an exegetical narrative about Job and his friends [4]. The redactors borrowed it from there—or perhaps from a collection of proverbs of Rava—and applied it to the story of Honi. These comments prove nothing about the Amoraic provenance of the stories. Indeed, as pseudo-*meimrot* they constitute telltale signs of the busy hands of the redactors.

The story of Moses's visit to R. Akiba's academy is attributed to Rav Yehuda in the name of Rav [9]. But in light of the heavy indications of Stammaitic activity throughout the story, this opening too should be seen as a pseudo-attribution. Many BT stories are attributed to this pair, and the redactors chose an authoritative tradent from hoary antiquity to be their "storytellers."[17]

Pseudo-*baraitot*

The pervasive intervention of the Stammaim extends even to the language of *baraitot* resulting in the creation of pseudo-*baraitot* of various types. In some cases the source originated as a *baraita* but was significantly changed by the Stammaim such that it no longer can be considered Tannaitic. The *baraita* of R. Yose b. Dormasqit's encounter with R. Eliezer provides a good example, as the Stammaim added the command that the disciple remove his eye and also spliced in Amoraic and Stammaitic traditions from

elsewhere in the Talmud [6].[18] A different type of pseudo-*baraita* follows immediately thereafter: "It was taught . . .". Here the Stammaim simply invented the tradition for their narrative purposes. Indeed, Hanokh Albeck noted many years ago that many aggadic *baraitot* introduced by the term *tanna,* "It was taught," are not authentic, and we now understand that at least some of them are Stammaitic pseudepigraphs.[19] A pseudo-*baraita* of this type states the punishments of Abdan [2]. Several such pseudo-*baraitot* appear in the story of the deposition of Rabban Gamaliel, including the account of his preventing students from entering the academy, where the Stammaim put in his mouth a saying borrowed from Rava [5]. In this case, too, a pseudo-*baraita* contains an Amoraic dictum. We can see, then, how the Stammaim easily constructed pseudo-Tannaitic sources. In general, narrative *baraitot* cannot be accepted as Tannaitic without compelling evidence and should always be suspected of being Stammaitic constructions.[20]

In conclusion, these methods of composition are remarkably similar to those employed by the Stammaim to create halakhic *sugyot*, and they strongly suggest that these same sages are responsible for both. Indeed, to distinguish the author-redactors of halakhic *sugyot* from those of narratives strikes me as a new form of the misguided effort to disconnect and separate halakha from aggada—here, to separate the producers of the two modes of discourse. Recent scholarship has demonstrated the flaws of this view, which dates back to attempts of the Babylonian Geonim to diminish the authority of aggada because it clashed with their rationalistic worldview. Scholars have argued for the unity and integrated nature of halakha and aggada, a condition which I tried to illustrate in the "Prelude" of Chapter 1.[21] Moshe Simon-Shoshan eloquently writes: "For the authors and editors of the classical rabbinic texts, narrative and halakhic discourse were inextricably intertwined. . . . It is particularly within narrative frameworks that the categories of law and literature, aggadah and halakhah tend to converge."[22] The compositional methods of Bavli narratives, together with the frequent inclusion of legal material, provide another reason in favor of a unified view of both the aggadic and halakhic discourse and composition.

Redactional Context

The nature of the relationships among these stories and their redactional contexts varies. At one end of the spectrum are the stories that function

as various types of exegesis of the Mishna. The story of Gehazi in Tractate Sanhedrin details the heinous sins that explain why the Mishna excludes him from the next world [7]. The halakhic issue in the story of Abdan is the subject of the proximate Mishna [2]. By associating that view with R. Yose, the story potentially influences the normative ruling. Similarly the controversy of Rabban Gamaliel and R. Yehoshua over the status of the evening prayer relates directly to the Talmud's understanding of the Mishna's ruling on that topic, associating the Mishna's view with R. Yehoshua [5]. To a certain extent the story thus functions to contest the otherwise unopposed prescription of the Mishna. In other cases the story has a looser connection to the Mishna, serving not directly as exegesis but to expand upon the Mishna's concerns by providing thematically relevant materials. The account of Honi's long sleep follows the Mishna's story of Honi's rainmaking, thereby enhancing our picture of this legendary figure [4]. Aspects of the stories of Gehazi and Jesus in Tractate Sotah relate to the Mishna's understanding of the culpability expressed in the liturgy accompanying the ritual of the beheaded heifer [7]. To be sure, in all of these cases the stories contain additional themes and ideas not specifically connected to the concerns of the Mishna. Nevertheless, the redactional contexts of the stories illustrate the complex and varied relationships between law and narrative that characterize the Bavli. The Stammaim employed stories for a variety of purposes, among them to explicate, to expand upon, and to contest the Mishna and other legal sources.

In other cases the relationship between the story and Mishna is primarily associative rather than substantive. The story of Ilfa and R. Yohanan appears within a series of stories that involve the potential collapse of an unsound wall [3]. This series was included in the Talmudic discussion of mTa 3:7 on account of its mention of the collapse of a building (*mapolet)* as a reason for fasting. The story of Moses questioning God about adding crowns to the letters of the Torah appears in connection with a law of the Mishna about proper and improper forms of letters on the scrolls of the *mezuzah* [9]. While numerous other laws of scribal writing follow, these laws lack any real connection to the thematics of the story. The accounts of disciples reporting homilies to their masters follow a halakhic tradition about the septennial gathering (*haqhel*), the subject of the first homily. That halakhic tradition is brought to resolve a question regarding the law of "Appearance" (*re'iah*), the topic of the Mishna [6]. Here we have an associative connection, not to the Mishna itself, but to legal sources cited in the course of its interpretation. Yet, even in these cases, we noted that the placement of stories

within these legal contexts yields new meanings and significance. Although the primary reasons for the contextualization of the narratives were formal or associative, the juxtaposition of story and law often revealed secondary connections of a more substantive nature. We cannot say that the Stammaim contextualized these stories "merely" for associative reasons. They carefully chose contexts based on numerous and diverse considerations.

At the other end of the spectrum is the series of stories of astrologers, which has no thematic connection to the proximate Mishna and the related halakhic discussions in Tractate Shabbat [8]. In this case the redactional context is indeed determined solely because of the formal association: the introductory line of the larger *sugya* in which the stories are found has similar form to the previous tradition of the Talmudic discussion. However, the fact that these stories are part of a self-contained and independent *sugya* about astrology is probably responsible for the lack of substantive connection to proximate halakhic material. The entire *sugya*, including the series of stories, constitutes a freestanding essay of sorts that was incorporated in its entirety into that context.

A Babylonian Amoraic Story

These overlapping and interrelated methodological strategies enable us to identify stories that show signs of Stammaitic reworking and to determine to some extent the scope of that intervention. I would like to close with a negative example, a narrative that lacks Stammaitic reworking and therefore should be attributed to the Babylonian Amoraim, a conclusion supported by the source-critical evidence. If the Stammaitic techniques and markers delineated above are reliable, then their absence should be equally useful in helping us discern stories of Amoraic provenance. Here is the famous story of Hillel and the Passover sacrifice, which appears in the Tosefta, BT, and PT, set out in vertical columns to facilitate comparisons. (I have reversed the order of sections F2 and F3 of the PT to align them with the parallel passages in the other accounts.)

tPes 4:13–14	bPes 66a	yPes 6:1, 33a (529–30)
	[A] Our sages have taught: This law was concealed from the Bnei Betera.	[A] This law was concealed from the elders of Betera.

[B] Once the fourteenth [day of Nisan] fell on the Sabbath.

[B] Once the fourteenth [day of Nisan] fell on the Sabbath. They forgot and did not know whether the Passover supersedes the Sabbath or not. They said, "Is there anyone here who knows whether the Passover supersedes the Sabbath or not?"

[B] Once the fourteenth [day of Nisan] fell on the Sabbath, and they did not know whether the Passover supersedes the Sabbath or not.

[C] They said to them, "There is one man who came up from Babylonia, and Hillel the Babylonian is his name. He served the two great men of the generation, Shemaya and Avtalion, and he knows whether the Passover supersedes the Sabbath or not."

[C1] They said, "There is here a certain Babylonian named Hillel, who served Shemaya and Avtalion. He knows whether the Passover supersedes the Sabbath or not. Perhaps something good will come from him."

[D] They asked Hillel the Elder, "Does the Passover [sacrifice] supersede the Sabbath?"

[D] They sent and called for him. They said to him, "Do you know whether the Passover supersedes the Sabbath or not."

[D] They sent and called for him.

[E1] He said to them: "Do we have but one Passover [sacrifice] during the year that supersedes the Sabbath? We have more than 300 Passovers

[E1] He said to them, "Do we have but one Passover during the year that supersedes the Sabbath? Do we not have many more that 200 Passovers

[E1] He said to them, "Do we have but one Passover throughout the whole year that supersedes the Sabbath? Do not many Passovers throughout

during the year, and they supersede the Sabbath!"

during the year that supersede the Sabbath?"

the year supersede the Sabbath?"[23]

[E2] The whole [Temple] courtyard congregated around him.

[E2] They said to him, "How do you know this?"

[E2] They said to him, "Thus we thought that something good would come from you."

[F] He started to expound [the law] for them based on a topical analogy (*heqesh*), a *qal va-homer* [inference] and a *gezeira shava*.

[F1] He said to them, "The Regular [sacrifice, offered each morning and twilight] is a communal sacrifice, and the Passover is a communal sacrifice. Just as the Regular [sacrifice] is a communal sacrifice that supersedes the Sabbath, so the Passover is a communal sacrifice that supersedes the Sabbath.

[F1] From a topical analogy: Since the Regular [sacrifice] is a communal sacrifice that supersedes the Sabbath, so too the Passover is a communal sacrifice that supersedes the Sabbath.

[F2] "Another proof: It [Scripture] says in connection with the Regular [sacrifice] *[Present to me] at its appointed time*

[F2] He said to them, "It says *At its appointed time (Num 29:2)* in connection with the Regular [sacrifice], and it says *At its*

[F3] From a *gezeira shava*: Just as the Regular [sacrifice], in connection with which it says *At its appointed time*

(Num 29:2), and it says in connection with the Passover *[Keep the Passover] at its appointed time (Num 9:3)*. Just as the Regular [sacrifice], of which it says *At its appointed time,* supersedes the Sabbath, so the Passover, of which it says *At its appointed time*, supersedes the Sabbath.

appointed time (Num 9:3) in connection with the Passover. Just as *At its appointed time (Num 29:2)* [teaches that] the Regular sacrifice supersedes the Sabbath, so *At its appointed time (Num 9:3)* [teaches that] the Passover supersedes the Sabbath."

(Num 29:2), supersedes the Sabbath, so too the Passover, in connection with which it says *At its appointed time (Num 9:3),* supersedes the Sabbath.

[F3] "Moreover, it [can be deduced] *qal va-homer* (a minora ad maius.) If the Regular [sacrifice], for which one is not subject to [the punishment of] excision, supersedes the Sabbath, is it not logical that the Passover, for which one is subject to [the punishment of] excision, supersede the Sabbath?

[F3] Also, it can be deduced *qal va-homer* (a minora ad maius.) If the Regular [sacrifice], for which one is not punished with excision, supersedes the Sabbath, then the Passover, for which one is punished with excision—is it not logical that it supersedes the Sabbath?"

[F2] From a *qal va-homer*: If the Regular [sacrifice], for which one is not subject [to the punishment of] excision, supersedes the Sabbath, then the Passover, for which one is [subject to the punishment] of excision—is it not logical that it supersedes the Sabbath?

[G] They said to him, "Did we think that something good would come from a Babylonian?

[G1] "The topical analogy that you stated can be refuted: What you say of the

Regular sacrifice, which has a limit [of two per day], you cannot say of the Passover, which has no limit [in the number that may be offered].

[G2] "The *qal va-homer* that you stated can be refuted: What you say of the Regular [sacrifice], which is of the Most Holy [class of] sacrifices, you cannot say of the Passover, which is of the Lesser Holy sacrifices.

[G3] "The *gezeira shava* that you stated—one may not create a *gezeira shava* from his own study [but only if he received it as a tradition from his masters]."[24]

[F4] "In addition, I have received [a tradition] from my masters that the Passover supersedes the Sabbath. Not only the First Passover but even the Second Passover, and not only the communal Passover but even the individual Passover."

[G4] Even though he [Hillel] was sitting and expounding for them the whole day, they did not accept it [the ruling] from him until he said to them, "May [harm] befall me if I did not learn thus from Shemaya and Avtalion."

[see below, P]	[H] Immediately they seated him at the head and appointed him Nasi over them, and he expounded the laws of the Passover throughout the day.	[H] As soon as they heard that from him they rose and appointed him Nasi over them.
	[I] He began to rebuke them with words. He said to them, "What caused it that I should come up from Babylonia and that I should be the Nasi over you? Your laziness, that you did not serve the two great men of the generation, Shemaya and Avtalion."	[I] As soon as they appointed him Nasi over them he began to rebuke them with words saying, "What caused your need for this Babylonian [= me]? Is it not that you did not serve the two great men of the world, Shemaya and Avtalion, who were dwelling with you?"
		[J] As soon as he rebuked them with words the law was concealed from him.
[K] They said to him, "What will the people do, for they did not bring their [slaughtering] knives and Passovers to the temple [prior to the Sabbath, since they did not know that they would be sacrificing on the Sabbath]?"	[K] They said to him, "Master: If one forgot and did not bring a knife on the eve of the Sabbath, what [is the law]?"	[K] They said to him, "What will we do for the people—they did not bring their knives?"

	[L] He said to them, "This law I heard and forgot.	[L] He said to them, "This law I heard and forgot.
[M] He said to them, "Leave them be. The holy spirit is upon them. If they are not prophets, they are the sons of prophets."	[M] But leave Israel be. If they are not prophets, they are the sons of prophets."	[M] But leave Israel be. If they are not prophets, they are the sons of prophets."
[N] What did Israel do at that time? He whose Passover was a lamb hid [the knife] in its wool. He whose Passover was a kid [goat], tied it [the knife] between its horns, and [thus] they brought their knives and Passovers to the temple, and they slaughtered their Passovers.	[N] The next day, he whose Passover was a lamb stuck it [the knife] in its wool. He whose Passover was a kid [goat], stuck it between its horns.	[N] Immediately, he whose Passover was a lamb stuck it [the knife] in its hair. He whose Passover was a kid tied it between its horns. It turned out that their Passovers brought their knives with them.
	[O] He [Hillel] saw the act and remembered the law and said, "Thus I received the tradition from the mouth of Shemaya and Avtalion."	[O] As soon as he saw the event he remembered the law. He said, "Thus I heard from Shemaya and Avtalion."
[P] On that very day they appointed Hillel Nasi (Patriarch), and he taught them the laws of the Passover.		

The parallel portions indicate that the three accounts are versions of one original source. Here, as in other such cases, the earlier Toseftan source was transformed and appears in the BT and PT in a later and more developed form. To fully uncover the tradition history we must start with an analysis of the Tosefta before proceeding to the Talmuds.

The primary theme of the Tosefta's version is the sources of rabbinic law: How do the rabbis determine the law when the Torah does not legislate on that particular case? So, the story constructs a situation in which the community does not know the law [B], and they turn to a sage, Hillel the *Elder* [D]. He responds to their query with an engaging rhetorical question and somewhat cryptic statement, providing an affirmative answer but not a complete explanation [E1]. The people accordingly gather around him for clarification, and he offers four proofs for his claim [F1–F4]. The first three exemplify standard methods of rabbinic halakhic exegesis: the general principle (*binyan av*), scriptural analogy (*heqesh*), and logical deduction (*qal va-homer = a minori ad maius*), though the Tosefta does not supply these technical terms. Hillel continues with a fourth source of his knowledge, received oral tradition ("thus I heard"; F4). We have then four distinct sources of law—three types of inferences and tradition. In this respect we might consider Hillel's first response about the 300 "Passovers" (by which he means other types of sacrifices offered on the Sabbath throughout the year) as yet another source, namely legal analogy.[25] The people accept Hillel's answer and present him with a follow-up question that he evidently does not know [K]. This scene provides an opportunity to introduce another source of law, common practice [M–N]. Because of a type of divine providence ("the holy spirit is upon them"), the entire people will not fall into error, hence one can deduce law by observation.[26] Thus the story concisely and elegantly illustrates five or six sources of rabbinic law. Having witnessed Hillel's knowledge, the people appoint him Nasi [P]. This conclusion introduces a secondary theme, that the sage most knowledgeable in law should hold authority. Note the irenic tone of the narrative and the absence of conflict or tension between characters.[27]

Let us turn now to the Bavli's version, which both revises the themes found in the Tosefta and adds new ones. The secondary theme of the Tosefta, that the most erudite sage should be the Nasi or communal authority, becomes primary in the Bavli. The Bavli accordingly opens with the current leaders, the Bnei Betera, not knowing the law.[28] Hillel therefore ends up replacing the incumbents because of his superior knowledge rather than being appointed to a leadership vacuum [A]. Moreover, the Bavli emphasizes the link between knowledge and authority by narrating Hillel's

appointment directly after his show of erudition, rather than as a postscript [H vs. P], and stressing the cause-and-effect relationship ("*immediately* they seated him at the head"). This move also subordinates the Tosefta's primary theme, the different sources of rabbinic law, to the theme of leadership. Indeed, the Bavli omits two of Hillel's proofs [F1, F4], since the remaining two sufficiently demonstrate Hillel's mastery of Torah, and the Bavli is less interested in modeling all the different sources of rabbinic law.

A new element in the Bavli is Hillel's arrogant rebuke of the people for their lack of Torah study (I). The storytellers portray his action as a negative characteristic and as inappropriate behavior for a leader. Although not stated explicitly, the story clearly portrays his forgetting the law as punishment for the rebuke (K–L): because he rebuked them, he forgot the law (as opposed to simply not knowing it, as implied in the Tosefta; L–M.)[29] This causal relationship emerges also from the measure-for-measure punishment: because Hillel chastises the people for not serving Shemaya and Avtalion [I; another datum not mentioned in the Tosefta], he receives measure-for-measure punishment by forgetting the law he learned from their mouths [O]. Thus, a second theme in the Bavli is the appropriate conduct of the leader and the consequences of arrogance. In this context the final sections serve less to model other sources of law as to demonstrate the need for humility and perhaps even the dispensability of a misbehaving Nasi (in that the people act correctly on their own).

Hillel's Babylonian provenance is a minor theme in the Bavli. Hillel is identified as "the Babylonian" (C), not "the Elder," and as one who "came up from Babylonia" (C). Later he emphasizes that the people's laziness "caused it that I should come up from Babylonia and that I should be the Nasi over you" (i.e., you Palestinians) (I). These changes express pride in Hillel's Babylonian origins and the storytellers' belief in the superiority of their Babylonian tradition, yet I would not call the mentions of Babylonia a polemic. Nevertheless, as opposed to the Tosefta, the confrontations and tensions are much more palpable.

The Yerushalmi shares with the Bavli a number of these changes, including the main thematic shift to the idea that the most knowledgeable sage should be the Nasi. It too starts with the Bnei Betera not knowing the law (A), refers to Hillel's teachers Shemaya and Avtalion (C, I), locates Hillel's appointment immediately after he resolves the legal question (H), and continues with Hillel's arrogantly rebuking the people and consequently forgetting the law (L). Clearly a common tradition underpins the BT and PT versions; the concluding sections of the story are almost identical (K–O).[30]

The PT version differs from the BT in two major ways.[31] Most significant

is the addition of section G, in which the people reject Hillel's first three proofs with sophisticated arguments of their own (G1–G3). And, despite Hillel's producing further demonstrations (he "was sitting and expounding for them the whole day"), they do not accept his claim until he bases it on oral tradition (G4).[32] David Rosenthal has shown that the sages of Palestine and Babylonia differed in their attitudes toward received tradition and logical deduction as the source of law, the Palestinians preferring the former and the Babylonians the latter.[33] Consequently, in our Bavli version the people accept Hillel's logical proofs, whereas in the Palestinian version the people reject them, revealing flaws in the logic and remaining unconvinced "until" Hillel discloses that he also received a tradition on this matter. Whereas the Tosefta invokes "oral tradition" as another source of the law, apparently of equal import to the logical proofs (F4), the Bavli omits it and the Yerushalmi transforms it into the crucial source, indeed the only source that really counts (G4).

Second, and related to this difference, is the issue of Hillel's Babylonian origin, which the PT treats with irony. Although the people initially express optimism that Hillel can resolve their difficulty (C1), and then satisfaction at his claim to know the law (E2), after rejecting his actual proofs they sarcastically repeat their earlier words almost verbatim, "Did we think that something good would come from a Babylonian?" (G). Hillel's Babylonian origins become the target of ridicule in the PT, not celebration, as in the BT. The PT presents Hillel's logical proofs and Babylonian heritage—the proofs presumably are a function of his Babylonian heritage—in a negative light. The tensions and conflicts are even more palpable than in the BT.

Which story is more original, the BT or PT? Not only does the BT seem to represent the earlier version, but the PT seems to be a deliberate reworking of the BT (or a version similar to the BT)! In general, the BT version is closer to the Tosefta than that of the PT, despite the changes noted above. Also, the BT is shorter than the PT, strongly suggesting that it is earlier, as narratives tend to increase in length and complexity over the course of time. More specifically, the PT has added the rejections of Hillel's logical demonstration (G1–G3), so as to prioritize oral tradition as the crucial source of law. It is highly unlikely that the BT omitted these sections from a version akin to the PT, as these also do not appear in the Tosefta, clearly the earliest version. While the Bavli does omit Hillel's proof from tradition (F4), it also omits the first logical proof (F1), hence these changes probably result from the general thematic shift: the BT storytellers wish to emphasize the issue of knowledge and leadership, and Hillel's knowledge is adequately demonstrated with two proofs. If the BT is an edited version of the PT, why omit

the first logical proof (F1) and not just cut the rejections (G)? Indeed, the BT storytellers retained the focus on received tradition in the second half of the story, revealing that promoting logic over tradition was not their agenda [O].[34] Moreover, the PT's more developed form can be seen in its summary introduction of the logical proofs with the appropriate technical terms, a section that appears neither in the Tosefta nor the Bavli (F).

The PT's treatment of the Babylonian provenance of Hillel is a reaction to the BT's adding those elements to the Tosefta, which makes nary a mention of Hillel's origins, identifying him rather as "Hillel the Elder" (B). It is hard to imagine that the PT storytellers added Hillel's Babylonian background to the Tosefta only to neutralize it, and that the BT storytellers subsequently omitted the neutralizations. Clearly, the BT storytellers incorporated subtle promotions of Babylonia which the later PT storytellers felt compelled to counterbalance. They evidently did not feel they had the authority to eliminate these elements from the tradition they received and chose instead to add offsetting phrases. Third, the PT has clarified the causal nexus between Hillel's rebuke and his forgetting the law by adding an explicit line, "As soon as (*keivan*, or 'Since') he rebuked them with words the law was concealed from him" (J). In the BT the causal relationship emerges implicitly from the order of events (I–K).[35]

Comparison of the three versions therefore suggests that the PT postdates the BT, which entails that the BT is of Amoraic, not Stammaitic, provenance. Let us now turn to evidence based on thematics and compositional process. The BT version lacks all the telltale themes of Stammaitic interest: academic setting, dialectics, violence, shame, genealogy (*yihus*), and elitism. (Let me emphasize that Hillel's logical proofs are *not* the type of dialectics thematized in Stammaitic narratives. While they involve intellectual acumen, they do not entail fast-paced argumentation, propounding objections, and the need to respond quickly to the questions fired by other sages. Hillel's proofs point to the source of the law; dialectics is an activity.) Indeed, the story is almost anti-elitist in its portrayal of the commoners (*amei ha'arets*) turning the tables on the arrogant sage and then modeling the correct behavior that he forgot. Had the Stammaim reworked the story, they probably would have depicted Hillel as feeling ashamed at forgetting the law and lacking an answer; one could hardly find a more embarrassing situation for a sage. Nor does the compositional process show any sign of Stammaitic intervention, as the story neither recycles material from elsewhere nor borrows from other BT traditions. There are a couple of stock phrases and motifs, such as the notion of a law being concealed from certain individuals (A),[36] but nowhere else do we find a law concealed from the

Bnei Betera specifically. This suggests that the (Amoraic) storytellers simply incorporated common motifs from their repertoire, rather than transferring an element from another source.

We have, then, an instructive example of a Babylonian Amoraic story. The Amoraic storytellers substantially transformed their Toseftan source to serve their different interests and culture. Yet their interests and culture differ from those attested in stories reworked by the Stammaim. Bavli stories must accordingly be examined on a case by case basis and cannot all be assigned to the Stammaim. While this fact complicates study of Bavli stories in some respects, it also allows for sharper and more nuanced reconstructions of the Amoraic and Stammaitic rabbinic cultures. The various methodological approaches employed throughout this book allow us both to identify signs of Stammaitic reworking and to notice their absence, and thereby to describe the discrete worldview and culture of the Stammaim.

We close with another vignette of rabbinic masters and disciples:

> [A] Rav Nahman and R. Yitshaq were sitting at a meal. Rav Nahman said to R. Yitshaq: "Let the master say something!" He said to him: "Thus said R. Yohanan: One should not speak during a meal, lest his windpipe open before the gullet and he come to danger (by choking on his food)."
>
> [B] After he had eaten, he [Rav Nahman] said to him, "Let the master say something!" He [R. Yitshaq] said to him, "Thus said R. Yohanan: Our patriarch Jacob never died." He [R. Nahman] said to him, "Was it for nothing that the wailers wailed and the eulogizers eulogized and the embalmers embalmed??" He [R. Yitshaq] said to him: "I am interpreting (*doresh*) a verse, as it says: *But you, have no fear, My servant Jacob, declares the Lord. Be not dismayed, O Israel! I will deliver you from far away, your descendants from their land of captivity (Jer 30:10)*. [The verse] connects (*meqish*) him (Jacob) to his descendants. Just as his descendants are alive, so too he is alive." (bTa 5b)[37]

Rav Nahman exhorts his master to teach him some Torah as they sup, seeking nourishment for his soul to complement the food for his body.[38] R. Yitshaq, however, initially refuses to oblige, invoking a dictum of R. Yohanan that one ought not converse over a meal lest the food go down the wrong way. As surely as the sage would not mix meat and milk, he will not mix food for the gullet with talk from his windpipe. Now, we might wonder

whether his statement paradoxically fulfils his pupil's request, as it provides valuable—perhaps even life-saving—instruction. If a master teaches his student why he cannot teach him, do we consider that teaching or not? Be that as it may, after the meal Rav Nahman repeats his request, making it clear that he desires a different sort of instruction (B). He seeks religious inspiration of an aggadic mode, not a halakha governing mundane activity. But just as R. Yitshaq begins to cater to his request with yet another tradition ascribed to R. Yohanan, Rav Nahman interrupts with a strenuous objection. From paradox to comedy: I picture Rav Nahman at first shutting his mouth quickly at his master's semi-rebuke, instinctively drawing his hand to his lips to signal that he will remain quiet. Subsequently he cuts off his master midsentence, blurting out a protest in highly rhetorical style. Twice the eager disciple has spoken too soon.

R. Yitshaq now explains that his opening words were in fact a scriptural interpretation (*derasha*), and not—as Rav Nahman seems to have thought—a factual or historical claim. The prophet Jeremiah calls the people of Israel "my servant Jacob" and, using classic biblical parallelism, promises deliverance both to "you (= Jacob)" and to "your descendants." R. Yitshaq employs the same midrashic technique of a scriptural analogy (*heqesh*), the sort we saw attributed to Hillel, to draw a connection between the two. He thereby links the qualities of the one to the other: just as the descendants, the people of Israel, are alive, so Jacob must be alive. Back from comedy to paradox, though a serious and theologically significant paradox, assuming that is not an oxymoron. The historical Jacob is dead, but "Jacob," as a symbol and metonym for the people, lives on together with his descendants. Factually speaking, Jacob was mourned, embalmed, and buried; midrashically speaking he lives and endures.[39]

This brief episode features drama, humor, surprise, paradox—and yet a theological claim of great import. It also contains an array of literary forms. Overall, it is a story, which is composed primarily of dialogue, including two quotations. It contains a halakhic tradition, namely an apodictic saying, and an aggadic tradition, namely a midrash on Scripture. Rav Nahman initially mistakes the latter for an assertion of fact. In this respect the story is acutely conscious of its own modes and conventions. Indeed, the most enigmatic aspect of the story is Rav Nahman's confused reaction. Was he not well acquainted with the nature of rabbinic midrash? How could he think that his master meant to assert that the patriarch Jacob was alive? Did he believe that R. Yitshaq did not know the biblical story of Jacob's death backwards and forwards? Or did he know all this very well but impulsively cried out in surprise, only to immediately realize his own mistake even be-

fore the explanation? Or again, was his initial response a (fictional) interpolation by later storytellers for didactic purposes, to clarify to the audience the midrashic mode of R. Yitshaq's homily? Both Rav Nahman and the audience receive an additional lesson, on the importance of identifying the forms of rabbinic discourse. Our storytellers seem to be extremely adept in their ability to interweave halakha and aggada, story and midrash, dialogue and quotation. But of course one must be able to distinguish them all and understand the particular conventions of each.

The midrash that "Jacob never died" yet lives on with his descendants strikes me as appropriate for the Stammaim. They operated in an anonymous mode, transmitting their traditions, though not their names, to their students. Within a few generations their names and identities were lost. Not long after that, they were completely gone from the historical memory of the Jewish people. For over a millennium, from the Geonic period until the twentieth century, they were absent from the historical record. Even now, as scholars have come to recognize their tremendous contribution and have reinscribed them into their rightful place in history and memory, their names will never be known. Yet throughout this long period of oblivion they never really died, as their descendants, both physical and spiritual, continually studied the Talmud they created. They too live on wherever and whenever the Bavli is learned. They are the true rabbinic masters, and students of Talmud will forever be their disciples.

Appendix

Texts in Hebrew and Aramaic

Texts cited according to the CD-ROM of the Sol and Evelyn Henkind Talmud Text Databank, Version 5. The Saul Lieberman Institute of Talmudic Research (with minor corrections).

הנוסח ע"פ גירסה 5 של "מאגר עדי נוסח של התלמוד הבבלי ע"ש סול ואוולין הנקיינד"

פרק ב: יבמות מז ע"א. כתב-יד מנכן 95.

[א1] דר' חייא ור' שמעון ב"ר הוו יתבי פתח חד מינייהו ואמ' המתפלל צריך שיתן עיניו למעלה שנ' נשא לבבינו אל כפי' אל אל בשמים פתח אידך ואמ' כל המתפלל צריך שיתן עיניו למטה שנ' והיו לבי ועיני שם כל הימים

[א2] אדהכי אתא ר' ישמעאל ב"ר יוסי אמ' להו במאי עסיקיתו בתפילה א"ל כך אמ' אבא המתפלל צריך שיתן עיניו למטה ולבו למעלה כדי לקיים שני מקראו' הללו

[ב1] אדהכי אתא ר' למתיבתא אינהו דהוו קלילי [עיול?] איתיבי לדוכתייהו ור' ישמעאל ב"ר יוסי אגב איקריה הוה קא מפסע ואזיל

(1) א"ל אבדן מי הוא זה שמפסיע על ראשי עם קדוש א"ל אני ישמעאל ב"ר יוסי שבאתי ללמוד תורה מר'

(2) א"ל כלום אתה הגון ללמוד תורה מר' א"ל וכי משה רבינו הגון ללמוד תורה מפי הגבורה

(3) א"ל וכי משה אתה א"ל וכי רבך אלהים הוא

[ב2] אמ' רב יוסף שקליה למטרפסיה דקא"ל רבך ולא א"ל ר'

[ג] אדהכי אתא יבמה לקמיה א"ל ר' לאבדן פוק בדקה

לבתר דנפק א"ל ר' ישמעאל ב"ר יוסי כך אמ' אבא איש כתוב בפרשה אבל אשה בין קטנה

[ד1]א"ל ר' לאבדן תא לא צריכת כבר הורה זקן

[ד2] הוה קא מפסע אבדן ואתי א"ר ישמעאל ב"ר יוסי מי שנצרך לו עם קדש יפסיע על ראשי עם קדש מי שלא ניצרך לו עם קדש היאך מפסיע על ראשי עם קדש

[ד3] א"ל ר' לאבדן קום בדוכתיך

[ד4] תנא באותה שעה נצטרע אבדן וטבעו שני בניו ומאנו כלותיו

[ד5] אמ' רב נחמן בר יצחק בריך רחמנא דכספיה לאבדן בהאי עלמא

פרק ג: תענית כא ע"א. כתב-יד אוקספורד 366.

[א1] אילפא ור' יוחנן הוה דחיקא להו מילתא טובא אמרי ניקום וניזיל ונעביד עיסקא ונקיים בנפשין אפס כי לא יהיה בך אביון אזלו ואותיבו תותיה היא אשיתא רעיעא

[א2]והוו קא כרכי ריפתא שמעיה ר' יוחנן למלאך דקא א"ל לחבריה תא נשדייה עליהו וניקטלינהו שמניחין חיי עולם ועוסקין בחיי שעה א"ל אידך שבקינהו דחד מיניהו קימא ליה שעתא

[א3] א"ל ר' יוחנן לאילפא שמע מר מידי א"ל לאו אמ' ש"מ אנא הוא דקימ' לי שעתא איהדר ואזיל אנא איקיים בנפשאי כי לא יחדל אביון מקרב הארץ

[ב1] עד דאתא אילפא מלך ר' יוחנן כי אתא אילפא אמרו ליה אי הוה יתיב מר וגריס לאו מר הוה מליך

[ב2] אזל תלא נפשיה בקרסא דספינתא אמ' כל מאן דשאיל לי מילתא בדבי ר' חייא ובדבי ר' אושעיא ולא פשיטנא ליה ממתני' נפילנא מקרסא וטבענא בנהרא

[ב3] אתא ההוא סבא תנא ליה

[A] האומ' תנו שקל לבני בשבת וראויין לתת להן סלע נותנין להן סלע

[B] ואם אמ' אל תתנו להן אלא שקל אין נותנין להן אלא שקל

[C] ואם אמ' אם מתו ירשו אחר[י] תחתיהן בין שאמ' תנו ובין שאמ' אל תתנו אין נותנין להם אלא שקל

[ב4] הא מני ר' מאיר היא דאמ' מצוה לקיים דברי המת

פרק ד: תענית כג ע"א. כתב-יד אוקספורד 366.

[א] א"ר יוחנן כל ימיו של אותו צדיק היה מצטער על מקרא הזה שיר המעלות בשוב יי את שיבת ציון היינו כחולמים אמ' שבעין שנין בחלמא

[ב1] יומא חד הוה קא אזיל באורחא חזא ההוא גברא דקא נטע חרובא א"ל מכדי חרובא עד שבעין שנין לא טעין פשיט' לך דחיית שבעין שנין ואכלת מינה א"ל אנא עלמא בחרובא אשכחתיה כי היכי דשתלו לי אבהתי אנא נמי אשתיל לבני

[ב2] איתיב קא כריך ריפתא אתיא ליה שינתא נים איהדרא ליה משוניתא איכסי מינא נים שבעין שנין

[ב3] כי קם חזא גברא דקא מנקיט מההיא חרובא א"ל ידעית מאן שתליה להאי חרוב' א"ל אבוה דאבא [א'] אמ' ודאי שבעין שנין בחילמא

[ג1] אזל לביתיה אמ' להו בריה דחוני המעגל מי מיקיים אמרו ליה בריה לא איתיה בר בריה איתיה אמ' להו אנא הוא לא הימנוה

[ג2] אזל לבי מדרשא שמעינהו לרבנן דקאמרי נהירא לן שמעתתא האידנא כי הנך שני דחוני המעגל דכי הוה עייל לבי מדרשא כל קושיא דהוה להו לרבנן הוה מיפרק אמ' להו אנא הוא לא הימנוה לא נהגו ביה יקרא כדמיבעי ליה בעא רחמי ונח נפשיה

[ד] אמ' <רבא> הינו דאמרי אינשי או חברא או מיתותא

פרק ה: ברכות כז ע"ב ובכורות לו ע"א. כתב-יד פירנצה 9–7 I II.

ברכות כז ע"ב פירנצה 9–7 I II

[1] תנו רבנן מעשה בתלמיד אחד

בכורות לו ע"א פירנצה 9–7 I II

ר' צדוק הוה ליה בוכרא רמא ליה סערי בסלי נצרים של ערבה קלופה בהדי דקאכיל איבזע שיפתיה

[2] שבא לפני ר' יהושע
[3] אמ' לו תפילת ערבית רשות או חובה
[4] אמ' לו ר' יהושע רשות
[5] בא לפני רבן גמלי' אמ' לו
[6] רשות או חובה
[7] אמ' לו רבן גמלי' חובה
[8] אמ' לו והלא ר' יהושע אמ' לי רשות
[9] אמ' לו המתן עד שיכנסו בעלי תריסין לבית המדרש
[10] [כיון שנכנסו בעלי תריסין לבית המדרש] (עמד) עמד השואל ושאל
[11] תפילת ערבית רשות או חובה
[12] א' לו רבן גמלי' חובה
[13] אמ' רבן גמלי' כלום יש אדם שחולק בדבר זה
[14] א' לו ר' יהושע לאו
[15] א' לו והלא משמך א' לי רשות
[16] אמ' לו יהושע עמוד על רגליך ויעידו בך
[17] עמד ר' יהושע על רגליו ואמ' אילו אני חי והוא מת יכול החי להכחיש את המת ועכשיו שאני חי והוא חי היאך יכול החי להכחיש את החי
[18] והיה רבן גמליא' יושב ודורש ור' יהושע עומד על רגליו עד שריננו כל העם ואמרו לו לחוצפית התורגמן עמוד עמד
[19] אמרי עד כמה ליצעריה וליזיל
[20] אישתקד בראש השנה צעריה אתא בבכורות במעשה דר' צדוק צעריה השתא נמי קא מצער ליה תו

אתא לקמיה דר' יהוש'
א"ל חילקנו בין חבר לעם הארץ
א' לו ר' יהוש' ה[י]ן
בא לפני רבן גמל' א' לו
חילקנו בין חבר לעם הארץ
א' לו רבן גמל' [לא]
א' לו והלא ר' יהוש' א' לי הן
א' לו המתן עד שיכנסו בעלי תריסין לבית המדרש

כיון שנכנסו לבית המדרש עמד השואל ושאל

כלום חילקנו בין חבר לעם הארץ

א' לו ר' יהוש' לאו
א' לו רבן גמל' והלא משמך אמרו לי הין
יהושע עמוד על רגליך ויעידו בך
עמד ר' יהוש' על רגליו וא' היאך אעשה אילמלי אני חי והוא מת יכול החי להכחיש את המת עכשיו שאני חי והוא חי היאך יכול החי להכחיש את החי
היה רבן גמל' יושב ודורש ור' יהוש' עומד על רגליו עד שריננו כל העם ואמרו לחוצפית המתורגמן עמוד ועמד

פרק ו: חגיגה ג ע"א כתב-יד ספרייה בריטית (400) HARL. 5508

[1][א] תנו רבנן מעשה בר' יוחנן בן ברוקה ור' אלעזר חסמא שהלכו להקביל את פני ר' יהושע בפקיעין אמ' להן מה חידוש היה בבית המדרש היום אמרו לו ר' תלמידיך אנו ומימיך אנו שותין
[ב1] אמ' להן אעפ"כ אי איפשר (ב)בית המדרש בלא חידוש הלכה שבת של מי היתה שבת של ר' אלע' בן עזריה היתה
[ב2] ובמה היתה אגדה היום אמרו לו בפרשת הקהל
[ג3] ומאי דרש בה הקהל את העם האנשים והנשים והטף וגו' אם אנשים באים ללמוד נשים באות לשמוע טף למה באין אלא כדי לקבל שכר למביאיהם
[ג1)] א' להן מרגלית טובה היתה בידכם וביקשתם לאבדה ממני
[ד1)2)] ועוד דרש בה את יי' האמרת היום ויי' האמירך היום א' להן הקב"ה לישר' אתם עשיתוני חטיבה אחת

בעולם ואני אעשה אתכם חטיבה אחת בעולם אתם עשיתוני חטיבה אחת בעול' דכ' שמע ישר' יי' אלהינו יי' אחד ואף אני אעשה אתכם חטיבה אחת בעולם דכת' מי כעמך כישר' גוי אחד בארץ

[דב(3)] ואף הוא פתח ודרש דברי חכמ' כדרבונ' וכמסמרות נטועים < . . . >

למה נמשלו דברי תורה לדרבן לומ' לך מה דרבן זה מכוין את הפרה לתלמיה להביא חיים לעולם אף דברי תורה מכוונין את לומדיהן מדרכי מיתה לדרכי חיים אימה דרבן זה מטלטל אף דברי תורה מטלטלין ת"ל וכמסמרות אי מה מסמר זה חסר ולא יתר אף דברי תורה חסירין ולא יתירין ת"ל נטועים מה נטיעה זו פרה ורבה אף דברי תורה פרין ורבין בעלי אסופות אילו תלמ' חכמ' שיושבין אסופות אסופות ועוסקין בתורה הללו מטמאין והללו מטהרין הללו אוסרין והללו מתירין הללו פוסלין והללו מכשירין ושמא יאמר אדם הואיל והללו מטמאין והללו מטהרין הללו אוסרין והללו מתירין הללו פוסלין והללו מכשירין היאך אני למד מעתה ת"ל נתנו מרועה אחד כולן אל אחד נתנם פרנס אחד אמרן מפי אדון כל המעשים ב"ה שנ' וידבר אלהים את כל הדברים האלה לאמר אף אתה עשה אזנך כארפכסת וקנה לך לב שומע לקנות את דברי המטמאין ואת דברי המטהרין את דברי אוסרין ואת דברי מתירין את דברי פוסלין ואת דברי מכשירין

[ג'] ובלשון הזה אמ' להם אין דור יתום שר' אלעזר בן עזריה שרוי בתוכו

[ק] ולימרו ליה בהדיא משום מעשה שהיה

[II][אא] דתניא מעשה בר' יוסי בן דורמסקית שהלך להקביל את פני ר' אליעזר בלוד אמ' לו מה חידוש היה בבית המדרש היום

[בב] א' לו נימנו וגמרו עמון ומואב מעשרין מעשר עני בשביעית

[גג] א' לו יוסי פשוט ידיך וקבל עיניך פשט ידיו וקיבל עיניו

[דד] בכה ר' אלי' ואמ' סוד יי' ליריאיו ובריתו להודיעם וא' לו יוסי צא ואמור להם אל תחושו למיניינכם כך מקובלני מרבן יוחנן בן זכאי ששמע מרבו ורבו מרבו הלכה למשה מסיני עמון ומואב מעשרין מעשר עני בשביעית

[הה] הרבה כרכים כיבשו עולי מצרים שלא כיבשו עולי בבל מפני שקדושה ראשונה קידשה לשעתה ולא קדשה לעתיד לבוא הניחום כדי שיהו עניים סומכין עליהן בשביעית

[ג'] תנא לאחר שנתישבה דעתו אמ' יהי רצון שיחזרו עיני יוסי למקומן וחזרו

פרק ז: סוטה מז ע"א. כתב-יד מנכן 95.

[ס] ת"ר שלש' חלאים חלה אליש' אחד שגיר' דובי' בתינוקו' ואחד שדחפו לגחזי בשתי ידיו ואחד שמת בו שנ' ואליש' חל' את חליו אשר ימו' בו

[ו] ת"ר לעולם תהא שמאל דוח' וימין מקרב' לא כאליש' שדחפו לגחזי בשתי ידיו ולא כיהוש' בן פרחי' שדחפו לישו הנוצרי בשתי ידיו

[א] אלישע מאי הי'

[בו] דכ' ויאמ' נעמן הואל וק' ככרי' ויפצר בו ויקח וכתו' ויאמ' אליו לא לבי הלך כאשר הפך איש מעל מרכב' לקרא' וגו'

[בה] ומי שקיל כולי האי כסף ובגדי' הוא דשקל

[גו] א"ר יצח' באות' שע' היה אליש' עוסק בשמנ' שרצי'

[גה] א"ל רשע הגיע שעה ליטול שכר שמנ' שרצי' צרע' נעמן תדבק בך ובזרעך עד עול' ויצא מלפניו מצורע כשלג

[ג3] וארבע' אנשי' היו מצורעי' פתח השער א"ר יוחנן זה גחזי ושלש' בניו
[ו1] וילך אליש' דמשק למ' הלך א"ר יוחנן שהלך להחזירו בתשוב' ולא חזר א"ל חזור
[ו2] א"ל כך מקובלני ממך כל שחטא והחטיא את הרבי' אין מספיקין בידו לעשו' תשוב'
[ה] מאי עבד
[ה1] איכ' דא' אבן שואב' תלה לחטא' ירבעם והעמיד' בין ארץ לשמי'
[ה2] ואיכ' דא' שם חקק לה על פומ' והית' אומר' אנכי יי אלהיך ולא יהיה לך
[ה3] ואיכ' דא' רבנן דחה מקמי' דכ' ויאמרו בני הנביאי' אל אלישע הנה המקום אשר אנחנו יושבי' שם וגו'
מכלל דעד האידנ' לא דחיק
[אא1] יהושע בן פרחיה מאי הי
[בב1] דכי הוה קטיל ינאי מלכ' רבנן <שמעון בן שטח אטמרתיה אחתי> ערק אתא לאלכסנדרי' של מצרי' כי
הוה שלמא שלח ליה שמע' בן שטח מיני ירושל' עיר הקדש לך אלכסנדרי' אחותי בעלי שרוי בתוכך ואני יושב'
שומם' א' ש"מ הוה ליה שלמ'
[גג1] כי אתי איקלע לההו' אושפיז' קום קמיהו שפיר ביקר' א' כמ' נאה אכסניא זו א"ל ר' עיני' טרוטות
[גג2] א"ל רשע בכך את' עוסק אפיק ארב' מא' שפורי שמתי'
[דד1] כל אמ' את לקמי' לא קבלי'
[דד2] ימא חד הוה קקרי ק"ש את' לקמי' הוה בדעתי' לקבולי' אחוי ליה בידי' סבר מידח' קדחי ליה
[ה1] אזל זקף לבינת פלחא
[ו1ו] א"ל הדור בך
[ו2ו] א"ל כך מקובלני ממך כל שחטא והחטיאי את הרבי' אין מספיקין בידו לעשו' תשוב'
[הה2] א' מר ישו הנוצרי על שכישף והסית והדיח את ישר'
[2] תני' ר' שמע' בן אלע' או' יצר אשה ותינוק תה' שמאל דוחה וימין מקרב'

פרק ח: שבת קנו ע"ב. כתב-יד אוקספורד 366.

[1][א] ומדשמואל נמי אין מזל לישראל
[ב] דשמואל ואבלט כי הוו יתבי ואזלי הנך אינשי לאגמא א"ל אבלט לשמואל האי גברא אזיל ולא אתי וטריק
ליה חיויא ומאית
[ג] א"ל שמואל אי ברישראל הוא אזיל ואתי
[ד] אדיתבי קא עסקי ביה אז[ל] ואתא קם אבלט שדייה לטוניה אשכח ביה חיויא דפסיק ושאדי בתרתי גובי
[ה] א"ל שמואל מה עבדת א"ל כל יומא הוינא מרמינן ריפתא בהדי הדדי ואכלינן והאידנא הוה איכא חד גבן
דלא הוה ליה ריפתא בהדיה והוה מכסיף אמינא לחבראי אנא קאימנא ומרמינא ליה ריפתא כי מטאי לגביה שוי
נפשאי כמאן דשקלי מיניה כי היכי דלא ליכסיף
[ו] א"ל מצוה קא עבדת ואתצלת נפק שמואל לבי מדרשא ודרש וצדקה תציל ממות ולא ממיתה משונ' אלא
אפי' ממית' עצמה

[2][א] ומדר' עקיבא נמי אין מזל לישראל
[ב] דר' עקיבא הויא ליה ברתא אמרו ליה כלדאי ההוא יומא דעיילא לבי גנאנה טריק לה חויא ומתה
[ג] הוה דאיג עלה דמילתא טובא
[ד] ההוא יומא דעיילה שקלה למכבנתא דעציתה בביזעא איתרמי לה עיילה בעיינא דחויא לצפרא כי קא
שקלה ליה הוה קא סריך ואתי חיויא בתרה

[ה] אמ' לה אבוה מה עבדת אמרה ליה בפניא אתא ענייא קרא אבב' והוו טרידי כולי עלמא בסעודתא וליכא דשמעיה קמית אנא שקלית ואמרי' הדין דסתאנא דיהביתו לי הבו ניהלי הא'ל מצוה קא עבדת ואתצלת

[ו] נפק ר' עקיבא ודרש וצדקה תציל ממות ולא ממיתה משונה אלא ממיתה עצמה

[3][א] ומדרב נחמן בר יצחק נמי אין מזל לישראל

[ב] דאימיה דרב נחמן בר יצחק אמרו לה כלדאי בריך גנבא יהא

[ג] לא שבקתיה גלויי רישיה אמרה ליה כסי רישך כי היכי [ד]ליהוי עלך אימתא דשמיא ובעי רחמי לא הוה ידע אמאי קאמרה ליה

[ד] יומא חד הוה קא גריס ויתיב תותי דיקלא נפל גלימא מעילוי רישיה דלי עייניה חזייה לדיקלא אלמיה יצר הינישב ארוביקל היקספ קילס ערה

פרק ט: מנחות כט ע"ב. כתב-יד ותיקן 120.

[א] אמ' רב יהוד' אמ' רב בשעה שעלה משה למרום מצאו להקב"ה ש<יושב ו>קושר קשרים לאותיות. אמ' לפניו רבונו של עולם מי מעכב על ידך.

[ב] אמ' לו [אדם] אחד יש שעתיד להיות בסוף כמה דורות ועקיבא בן יוסף שמו שעתיד לדרוש על כל קוצין וקוצין תילי תילים של הלכות.

[ג1] אמ' לפניו רבונו של עולם הראהו לי אמ' לו חזור (ב)[ל]אחורך.

[ג2] הלך וישב לו בסוף שמנה עשר שורות ולא היה יודע מה הן אומ'. תשש כחו. כיון שהגיע לדבר הלכה אמרו לו תלמידיו ר' מניין לך. אמ' להן הלכה למשה מסיני. נתיישבה דעתו.

[ג3] חזר ובא לפני הקב"ה. אמ' לפניו רבונו של עולם יש לך אדם כזה ואתה נותן תורה על ידי.

[ג4] אמ' לו שתוק. כך עלתה במחשבה לפני.

[ד1] אמ' לפניו רבונו של עולם. הראיתני תורתו הראיני שכרו. אמ' לו חזור לאחורך.

[ד2] חזר לאחוריו ראה ששוקלין בשרו במקולין.

[ד3] אמ' לפניו <רבונו של עולם> זו תורה וזו שכרה.

[ד4] אמ' לו שתוק כך עלתה במחשבה לפני

Notes

Chapter 1 *Introduction*

1. bBQ 60b. On the translation "agreeable," see Sokoloff, *DJBA*, 1117.

2. See *Aesop: The Complete Fables*, trans. Olivia Temple and Robert Temple (New York: Penguin Books, 1998), 42, fable #52: "The Middle-aged Man and his Mistresses." The translators comment that "the man is described as *mesopolios*, a form of *mesaipolios*, which means 'half-grey' but is also the word used by association to mean 'middle aged' in Greek."

3. See Marc Hirshman, "Aggadic Midrash," *The Literature of the Sages, Part 2*, ed. S. Safrai et al. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press; Assen: Van Gorcum, 2006), 2:124: "This burlesque parable is itself embedded in an extended treatment of damages caused by fire, in which halakha and aggada alternate with a consummate ending where a Palestinian aggada—David's heroes bringing him water from Bethlehem—is refashioned to contain strong legal content."

4. *SifDeut* #306 (339), according to mss London and Oxford. Translation based in part on Reuven Hammer, *Sifre: A Tannaitic Commentary on the Book of Deuteronomy* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986), 306. See Avraham Rosenthal, "Torah she'al peh vetorah shebikhtav—halakha uma'aseh," *Mehqerei Talmud 2*, ed. M. Bar-Asher and D. Rosenthal (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1993), 455–56, and the references there, n. 27.

5. Many of these sources, including those quoted here, have been collected in Steven Fraade, "Nomos and Narrative Before '*Nomos* and Narrative,'" *Yale Journal of Law and the Humanities* 17 (2005), 81–96.

6. Haim Nahman Bialik, *Revelation and Concealment: Five Essays*, trans. Leon Simon (Jerusalem: Ibis, 2000), 47. It should be observed, however, that there is some tension in Bialik's writing, as his florid descriptions in some respects dichotomize the two even as he pleads for unity.

7. Yaacov Sussman, "The Scholarly Oeuvre of Professor Ephraim Elimelech Urbach," *Ephraim Elimelech Urbach: A Bio-Bibliography*, ed. D. Assaf, *Supplement to Jewish Studies* 1 (1993), 75. Sussman is describing (and endorsing) Urbach's contribution here.

8. Robert Cover, "The Supreme Court, 1982 Term—Forward: *Nomos* and Narrative," *Harvard Law Review* 97:4 (1983), 5.

9. Clearly this is not meant to be a comprehensive analysis of Cover's theory or even of this rich quote. On the roots of Cover's thought in Jewish sources and the connection between halakha and aggada, see Gordon Tucker, "The Sayings of the Wise Are Like Goads: An Appreciation of the Work of Robert Cover," *Conservative Judaism* 45:3 (1993), 21–26; Samuel J. Levine, "*Halacha* and *Aggada:* Translating Robert Cover's *Nomos and Narrative*," *Utah Law Review* (1998), 485–95.

10. See William E. Cain, *The Crisis in Criticism: Theory, Literature, and Reform in English Studies* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1984), 104–21. In the chapter entitled "The Institutionalization of the New Criticism," Cain argues that despite the rejection of New Criticism in its "pure" form, almost all contemporary approaches have absorbed it as a point of departure: "So deeply ingrained in English studies are New Critical attitudes, values, and emphases that we do not even perceive them as the legacy of a particular movement. On the contrary: we feel them to be the natural and definitive conditions for criticism in general . . . [I]ts [= New Criticism's] lessons about literary study lead a vigorous life, setting the norms for effective teaching and marking the boundaries within which nearly all criticism seeks to validate itself. It is the New Criticism that defines and gives support to the central job of work we perform: 'practical criticism,' the 'close reading' of literary texts. 'Close reading' forms the substance of most critical essays and books" (105).

11. See n. 3.

12. Of course stories, aggadic exegesis, and other types of material may have a different provenance from legal materials; but after incorporating them into the Talmud, the redactors treated them in the same manner.

13. See Jeffrey L. Rubenstein, "Criteria of Stammaitic Intervention in Aggada," *Creation and Composition: The Contribution of the Bavli Redactors (*Stammaim*) to the Aggada*. ed. Jeffrey L. Rubenstein (Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 2005), 424–27.

14. Ibid., 427–28.

15. Ibid., 417–40.

16. See the chapter "The Yavneh Legend of the Stammaim: On the Invention of the Rabbis in the Sixth Century," in Daniel Boyarin's *Border Lines: The Partition of Judaeo-Christianity* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), 151–201, for an excellent example of the Stammaitic historical context put to good use. Boyarin attributes a cycle of stories to the "Stammaitic Yeshiva" (p. 154) and draws

wide-ranging conclusions about the development of rabbinic thought on several important issues.

17. This is not to deny the utility of other contexts (social, political, biographical, etc.).

18. Such as manuscript evidence; see *CBT*, 47.

19. David Weiss Halivni, "Aspects of the Formation of the Talmud," in *Creation and Composition*, 339–40.

20. See David Weiss Halivni's *Midrash, Mishnah, and Gemara: The Jewish Predilection for Justified Law* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1986), 82–88, in which he describes Stammaitic argumentation as "colorful, pulsating, outreaching, often presenting an interwoven and continuous discourse with a distinct, identifiable style of its own."

21. Ibid.

22. bMe 7b; see *CBT*, 57.

23. In the story at bBQ 117a–b, Resh Laqish warns R. Yohanan about the brilliant Rav Kahana who has arrived from Babylonia; see *CBT*, 39–41.

24. bPes 49a; *CBT*, 129.

25. *CBT*, 22–23.

26. David Goodblatt, *Rabbinic Instruction in Sasanian Babylonia* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1975), demonstrated that Babylonian Amoraim congregated in disciple-circles, not academies. On the lack of academies in the Land of Israel, see Catherine Hezser, *The Social Structure of the Rabbinic Movement in Roman Palestine* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1997), 195–214. On this question see most recently David Goodblatt, "The History of the Babylonian Academies," *The Cambridge History of Judaism*, vol. 4, *The Late Roman-Rabbinic Period*, ed. Steven T. Katz (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 821–39.

27. Louis Ginzberg, *Geonica* (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary, 1909), 6. See also *CBT*, 23 and 169 n. 31.

28. Fredric Jameson, *The Ideologies of Theory: Essays 1971–1986* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988), 5.

29. Robert Goldenberg, book review, *Henoch* 28 (2006), 184.

30. See Joshua Kulp's review of *CBT*, in *JBL* 123 (2004), 388–89, and Yaakov Elman's review in *Journal of Religion* 86 (2006), 700–702.

31. Elman, review, 701–2: "[Rubenstein's] attempt is beset with methodological pitfalls, the greatest of them being the fact that the redactional contribution can only partially be disentangled from the whole, and individual scholars will differ on this matter in accord with their notions of just how heavy-handed these redactors were and, indeed, whether there was a uniform redactional style in this regard and in many others" (701). Elman concludes, "In the end, we must accept Rubenstein's own fallback position," that these narrative studies only show differences between

rabbinic cultures of Babylonia and Palestine, but not necessarily of Stammaitic culture (702). Elman gives one example of the Amoraic roots of a phenomenon I claim to be Stammaitic, that of shame, pointing to "BT reports that prominent *amoraim* were shamed or embarrassed at various times, especially the most influential and creative Babylonian sage of all, the fourth-generation Rava (d. 352 CE), who is describe as having been shamed (*ikassif*) in four incidents." This is actually an instructive example that I would argue supports my view. First, in these anecdotes Rava is shamed in the court, not the academy, so it in no way clashes with my claims about shame within the academy. Second, that a similar anecdote is related three times, with a similar plot and shared language, suggests that the Stammaim probably created two accounts by transferring material from an original story (bGit 29b = 77b, bBM 97a, bAZ 22a). Third, the version in bAZ 22a shows additional signs of late composition. A late, sixth-generation Amora, Rav Geviha of Be Katil, comments on the incident, indicating that the episode was composed at a late date. Moreover, an anonymous narrator subsequently revises the whole account, claiming that Rava in fact gave the correct ruling. This removes the reason for Rava to have felt ashamed, prompting the anonymous Talmud to claim, "these things never happened," i.e., Rava never was ashamed! This fascinating passage requires detailed analysis, but on the surface it supports, rather than contests, the theory of Stammaitic composition of stories. In his review Elman seems to be discomfited by my description of the competitive, honor-shame culture of the academy, which he takes as "an unpleasant venue" that would stifle creativity. But the Stammaitic academy need not have been a stifling or detrimental environment any more than medical and law schools today are, and the competitive ethos probably was an effective pedagogical stimulus and a spur to creativity, as noted above.

32. See Richard Kalmin, "The Babylonian Talmud," *The Cambridge History of Judaism*, vol. 4, *The Late Roman-Rabbinic Period*, ed. Steven T. Katz (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 846: "Rubenstein's theory raises an exceedingly difficult question: if the anonymous editors authored the Talmud's greatest stories, why do the overwhelmingly prosaic, legal preoccupations of these commentators throughout the Talmud reveal them to be the very antithesis of deft storytellers and imaginative artists? The anonymous editors of the Talmud are unlikely candidates for authorship of the Talmud's brilliantly artistic, dramatically gripping, and ethically and theologically ambiguous narratives." To this we might reply: (1) The characterization of "legal preoccupations" as "prosaic" and "unimaginative" and of Talmudic stories as "brilliantly artistic" and "dramatically gripping" is subjective and culturally specific. Halivni, as we noted (n. 20 above), characterizes the legal discussions of the Stammaim as bearing a "rich and varied literary style," and as "colorful, pulsating, outreaching," which would make a decent match for brilliant and dramatic stories (Kalmin in his *Redaction of the Babylonian Talmud: Amoraic or*

Saboraic? [Cincinnati: HUCA Press, 1989], 56, notes that 'Halivni aptly characterizes Stammaitic argumentation as rich and overflowing,' referring to this same passage.) Others have characterized Bavli narratives and aggadot as chaotic and inane, which might make a good match for "prosaic" and unimaginative legal discussions. Philosophes of the French Enlightenment wrote of the Talmud's "ridiculous stories," of "impertinent and ridiculous" Talmudic fables, of their "barbarous style," "superstitions," "extravagance," and so forth. See Ronald Schechter, *Obstinate Hebrews: Representations of Jews in France, 1715–1815* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2003), 58. (2) Even if we grant Kalmin's description, there is no reason the same authors should not compose narratives in one way and law in another. According to Kalmin's logic, it should have been impossible for Maimonides to compose the "prosaic" *Mishneh Torah* and brilliant *Guide for the Perplexed* (not to mention assorted medical writings, etc.), or for Voltaire to author works in the many genres and forms he did (drama, science, mathematics, philosophy, poetry, satire, history, etc.), or for Umberto Eco to have written the brilliant and imaginative novel *The Name of the Rose* and the impenetrable *A Theory of Semiotics*, and so forth. (3) Kalmin's objection begs the question of the authorship of the Bavli narratives. If they are the Amoraim, as Kalmin seems to believe, the same problem surfaces, as the legal preoccupations of the Amoraim seem every bit as "prosaic" and unimaginative as those of the Stammaim.

A more moderate form of this view has been expressed by Shamma Friedman, who tends to refer to the authors of late stories as "late masters of the Aggada" (*ba'alei ha'aggada*) to distinguish them from the authors of the post-Amoraic argumentation. See "A Good Story Deserves Retelling," *Creation and Composition*, 72–73: "These anonymous authors may have lent their hands to other types of literary creativity as well, such as composition and arrangement. On the other hand, dialectical commentary was their forte, and they may well have left the other functions to specialists in those fields." Here Friedman footnotes Kalmin's objection. In a private communication, Friedman has explained to me that he is agnostic about the authorship of the stories and believes that they may have been composed by the authors of dialectical commentary, but that they were more likely to have been produced by colleagues who specialized in aggada. Ishay Rosen-Zvi, "Rereading the *Yeser* in Amoraic Literature," *Tarbiz* 77 (2007), 100–102 (Hebrew), articulates a similar position. Rosen-Zvi observes that the conception of the 'evil inclination' (*yester hara*) in the anonymous stratum of the Talmud differs from that attested among the Amoraim in that it is highly sexualized, depicted as a sexual urge rather than a propensity to sin in general. He also observes that the portrayal of the 'evil inclination' in Bavli stories coheres with the sexualized depiction of the anonymous stratum and not that of the Amoraim. To my mind this is excellent proof of the Stammaitic provenance of stories and should be added to our inventory of cultural differences between the

Stammaim and Amoraim. Rosen-Zvi, however, comments, "But I doubt whether we can identify the authors of the anonymous argumentation with the authors of the stories, though it is certainly possible that in both cases we are dealing with a post-Amoraic phenomenon." No real explanation is given for why the two should not be identified with each other, except a footnote to Friedman's comments cited above. Rosen-Zvi clarified to me that he thinks the authors of the stories could have been sitting in the same academy with the authors of the dialectical argumentation. In this case they would have shared the same social and cultural worlds, and the difference from my view is minimal.

It should also be noted that evidence for the existence of "masters of aggada" as a specialty distinct from "masters of halakha" (apparently including the Stammaim or authors of the dialectical argumentation) is very sketchy. While this is not the place for a comprehensive study, a quick check of the concordance shows that the term (*ba'a l(ei) (h)aggada*) appears only about five times in the Bavli (bHag 14a, bBQ 59b, bBB 8a, bBB 9b–10a, bBB 145b), and perhaps fifteen more in all of classical rabbinic literature. (Yonah Fraenkel, *Darkhei ha'aggada vehamidrash* [Givatayim: Yad Letalmud, 1991], 23–31, quotes and comments on many of these sources; we also find the term *bar aggada* a few times.) Most of these references appear in a schematic exegetical context, correlating parts of verses with types of rabbinic activity. For example, bHag 14a: "*For Lo! The Sovereign Lord of Hosts will remove from Jerusalem and from Judah prop and stay, every prop of food and every prop of water; soldier and warrior . . . . (Isa 3:1–4). Prop* — these are Masters of Scripture (*ba'alei miqra*). *Stay* — these are Masters of Mishna. . . . *Every prop of food* — these are Masters of Talmud. . . . *Every prop of water* — these are Masters of Aggada. . . . *Soldier* — this is a Master of Tradition (*baal shemuot*). *And Warrior*. This is one who knows how to give and take in the war of Torah. *Magistrate* — this is a judge." These designations may be informal honorific titles of sorts for sages who were experts at one type of learning, but they do not look like technical or official titles for a sage who engaged in study and production of one subject to the exclusion of all other. Moreover, to the best of my knowledge no sage is identified as a "Master of Aggada" in the entire Bavli! In *GenR* 12:9 (108), *LevR* 31:7 (725), and in a few other sources, R. Shmuel bar Nahman is called a "Master of Aggada" (or "Haggada; see the variants). But we have dozens of halakhic traditions attributed to him in the Bavli and Yerushalmi. The only other Amora called a Master of Aggada is Yehuda b. Pedaya in *GenR* 84:5 (1174), who was also active in halakha. Thus, there is little reason to think of "Masters of Aggada" as a specialty or specialized function (such as the *tannaim*, the professional memorizers), or to attribute stories specifically to them. Menahem (Marc) Hirshman, "Eizehu meqoman shel midreshei ha'aggada umi hem 'ba'alei ha'aggada,'" *Mehqerei Talmud 3*, ed. Y. Sussman and D. Rosenthal (Jerusalem: Magnes, 2005), 203–8, suggests that "Master of Aggada" actually refers to knowledge of esoteric or mystical traditions. Fraenkel, on

the other hand, sees the term as a slightly disparaging reference to popular preachers who entertained the public with homilies in nonacademic settings. But inside the rabbinic academy, the sages developed expertise in all forms of Torah. Neither Hirshman nor Fraenkel gives us reason to think the term refers to some sort of rabbinic sage specializing in aggada or narratives to the exclusion of halakha or dialectics. We also find the term *mesader aggadeta*, "Arranger of Aggada," four times in the Bavli: bBer 10a, bEruv 21b, bSuk 53a, bYom 38b. It is difficult to learn much from these four brief references. Fraenkel (*Darkhei ha'aggada vehamidrash*, 35–38) quotes the passages and concludes from them that the study of aggada was a central part of the study in the Babylonian academies. (Cf. Hirshman, "Aggadic Midrash," 121: "We have moreover the technical Aramaic phrase, 'to arrange aggada', which appears in the Babylonian Talmud and indicates an orderly recitation of aggada in the presence of Babylonian teachers"; see also pp. 123, 130–31.) Here too, nothing indicates the "arranger" was a specialist who produced stories and aggada but not halakha.

33. This view is essentially a form of the errant tendency to separate halakha and aggada; see Chapter 10, n. 20 and the text thereto.

Chapter 2 *The Shaming of Abdan*

1. These points were first made in a brief but excellent study by I. Ben-Shalom, "'And I Took Unto me Two Staves: The One I called Beauty and the Other I called Bands' (*Zach. 11:7*)," *Dor-le-dor: From the End of Biblical Times up to the Redaction of the Talmud: Studies in Honor of Joshua Efron*, ed. A. Oppenheimer and A. Kasher (Jerusalem: Bialik, 1995), 234 (Hebrew). Additional studies of the story include Yonah Fraenkel, *Iyyunim be'olamo haruhani shel sipur ha'aggada* (Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuhad, 1981), 78–82; Zivia Kaphir, "Sipur talmudi al bet hamidrash ve'al ha'omed berosho," *Alei-Siah* 31–32 (1992), 198–206; Ofra Meir, *Rabbi Judah the Patriarch: Palestinian and Babylonian Portrait of a Leader* (Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuhad, 1999), 125–29 (Hebrew). Adolph Buechler, "Mefaseah al rashei am qadosh," *Jubilee Volume in Honour of Edward Mahler*, ed. A. Wertheimer et al. (Budapest, 1937), 370–405, also provides many helpful insights.

2. The scribe of Munich 95 repeated or reduplicated a few pages that contain most of bYev 101b–105b. Only part of the story, however, appears on the first 105b from the duplicated section. The full story appears on the second 105b, and that text is presented above (2:349 of the facsimile edition; Jerusalem: Sefer Publishing, 1971).

3. The verse also appears in 2 Chr 7:16.

4. *Metivta*. This term, like the Hebrew *yeshiva*, can mean "academy" or "session" (study-session). In this context, where numerous students scramble to find their places, "academy" is probably intended.

5. Rashi, s.v. *einav*, explains "downward" as "towards the Land of Israel." See too Rambam, *Mishneh Torah*, *Tefila*, 5:4 for explanation of these directives.

6. Louis Jacobs, in "The Device of *Addehakhi*, 'Just Then,'" *Structure and Form in the Babylonian Talmud* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 95–99, observes, "It is noteworthy how the whole narrative proceeds in dramatic form. R. Ishmael arrives just as the other two are discussing the question of prayer. . . . Rabbi arrives just at the right moment. . . . Again, just at the right moment, the sister-in-law arrives" (98).

7. bHag 15a; see *TS*, 259–60; Alon Goshen-Gottstein, *The Sinner and the Amnesiac: The Rabbinic Invention of Elisha ben Abuya and Eleazar ben Arach* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000), 125–49. And see Daniel Boyarin, *Carnal Israel: Reading Sex in Talmudic Culture* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1993), 204–5.

8. So observes Kaphir, "Sipur talmudi," 200, who suggests that this scene portrays Abdan as one who "pursues peace" (*rodef shalom*), and emphasizes R. Ishmael's humility in that he ascribes the teaching to his father.

9. On the story's presupposing set places, see Goodblatt, *Rabbinic Instruction*, 257. On the highly structured academy, see *CBT*, 16–38.

10. See Geoffrey Herman, "The Story of Rav Kahana (BT Baba Qamma 117a–b) in Light of Armeno-Persian Sources," *Irano-Judaica* 6 (2008), 53–86. See too Buechler, "Mefaseah," 389 n. 31, and his reference to bEruv 53a; and see Rashi to bSot 39a, s.v. *velo*.

11. See below, " Building Blocks, Sources, and Motifs," #8.

12. For all manuscript sigla, see the appendix. And see *DJBA*, 541, 551.

13. Hayyim Kosovsky, *Otsar leshon hatalmud* (Jerusalem: Ministry of Education and Culture, 1954–82), 17:513.

14. The only difference is the shift from first to third person (*bati* vs. *ba*). The source of the Bavli is tBM 3:25. The phrase appears a few times in later midrashim (*Seder Eliahu Rabbah* and *YS*).

15. Kaphir, "Sipur talmudi," 204, points out that this line is ironic in that Abdan ultimately teaches Torah to R. Yehuda HaNasi.

16. There may be a further allusion to two other Bavli sources, bBer 63a and bSanh 68a.

17. See *TS*, 251–54, and Shamma Friedman, "Pereq ha'isha rabba babavli," in *Mehqarim umeqorot*, ed. H. Dimitrovksi (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary, 1977), 317–19.

18. On non-narrative comments see *TS*, 262–63.

19. See Rashi, ad loc., s.v. *shaqleih*: "Because he heard and did not protest."

20. See below, "Building Blocks, Sources, and Motifs," #8.

21. That Rabbi calls out directly to him suggests that he was still within earshot.

22. See below, "Halakhic Context," for discussion of this teaching.

23. Several manuscripts, however, read "Sit in your place"; see the appendix.

24. See Fraenkel, *Iyyunim*, 82.

25. See *TS*, 34–61; *CBT*, 67–79.

26. See *Iyyun Yaakov*, in *Eyn Yaakov*, 8 vols. (Jerusalem: Mansour, 1964), s.v. *tanna*: "He was punished with three punishments corresponding to the three times he fulminated against him." Despite the appearance of the term *tanna* to introduce the punishments, this is a pseudo-*baraita*, as often found in narratives. See Hanokh Albeck, *Mavo latalmudim* (Tel Aviv: Devir, 1969), 47–50; *TS*, 261–62.

27. See e.g. Rashi ad loc., s.v. *nitstara*.

28. The daughters-in-law were minors (as only minors make such "declarations of refusal" [*miyyun*].) They had been betrothed to the sons of Abdan by their mother or brothers after their father's death but had rejected the marriage.

29. Source-critical considerations point to a different reason for this punishment; see below, "Building Blocks, Sources, and Motifs," #9.

30. This idea seems to presuppose Bavli sources which say that one who shames his fellow in public loses his share in the world to come, e.g., bSanh 107a, bBM 59a. Abdan's punishment in this world obviates that more severe punishment.

31. Kaphir, "Sipur talmudi," 204, offers a similar interpretation.

32. bBM 84a; see *CBT*, 58–59.

33. See *TS*, 176–211, and see Kaphir's insightful analysis, "Sipur talmudi," 203–205. However, her historicizing claim that the storyteller means to criticize the real R. Yehuda HaNasi cannot be accepted.

34. A kernel of the story, however, appears in the parallel PT *sugya*. See below, "Halakhic Context."

35. A number of these have been identified by Ben-Shalom, "And I Took."

36. Four times in this exact form, and also bSanh 18a according to ms Yad Harav Herzog (other mss have minor variants). See too bHag 26a and bPes 3b (ms JTS). See Goodblatt, *Rabbinic Instruction*, 238–59, for the "The YTB formulae."

37. The Bavli's version appears to be an improvement, as Lam 3:41 actually mentions lifting one's heart and hands toward God in heaven, whereas Hos 5:15 simply states that God is now in heaven, implying, though not stating explicitly, that one should direct one's focus there.

38. Cf. Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah,* Prayer, 5:1–4. Maimonides codifies the issue of [A] under the rubric "Facing the temple" in 5:3, and the issue of [C] under the rubric "The posture of the body" in 5:4.

39. Note also that the Bavli no longer recalls who articulated which opinion, in contrast to part [C] of the PT.

40. For comprehensive discussion of the relationship between Rabbi and Rabbis Hiyya and Ishmael b. R. Yose, see Meir, *Rabbi Judah*, 69–132.

41. yBer 1:1, 2c (and parallels); yBer 4:1, 7c; yTa 4:2, 68a, etc. Also *RuthR* 3:4 (88–90) and elsewhere in Palestinian midrashim. For the Bavli see bShab 152b, bBer 35a, bEruv 9b, bTa 12a, bQid 33a, etc. Aharon Hyman, *Toledot tannaim ve'amoraim* (London, 1910; reprint, Jerusalem, 1964), 1212, notes that R. Shimon b. Rabbi's disputant is "almost always" R. Hiyya. R. Hiyya and R. Shimon b. Rabbi are also found together in the PT; see e.g. yMeg 1:11, 72c.

42. Ben-Shalom, "And I Took," 243.

43. Note that only bSanh 7b uses the locution "*holy* people" (*am qadosh*). tSanh 7:8 and bHor 13b read "people."

44. The version of tSanh 7:8 is similar, the major variants being "may **skip** (*meqaptsin*) on the heads of the people" and the omission of "to the synagogue."

45. Fraenkel, *Iyyunim*, 81 n. 19.

46. I.e., not walking on the paths, which he considered private property. The rabbis considered this perspective to be excessive piety.

47. Fraenkel, *Iyyunim*, 81 n. 19.

48. Ben-Shalom, "And I Took," 243.

49. Sokoloff, *DJBA*, 896, citing a study by J. N. Epstein, derives the word from the Middle Iranian *patifras*.

50. In bShab 46b Rava becomes annoyed at Rav Avia and asks him a difficult question intended to embarrass him. Rav Avia, however, knows the answer and responds appropriately, after which the story cites Rav Nahman's dictum. The point is that if Rava had succeeded in embarrassing Rav Avia, he would have received terrible punishment. Here Abdan did embarrass Rav Ishmael b. Yose, and he received the terrible punishment in this world, but not in the next.

51. *GenR* 10:2 (84), apparatus to line 6.

52. yBer 4:1, 7c = *GenR* 10:2 (84–85). See too yBer 5:1, 8d.

53. See Meir, *Rabbi Judah*, 367 n. 41.

54. Ben-Shalom, "And I Took," 243.

55. Ibid.

56. See Boyarin, *Carnal Israel*, 197–225, and "Literary Fat Rabbis: On the Historical Origins of the Grotesque Body," *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 1 (1999), 551–84.

57. The parallel in *PRK* 11:20 (196) tells this of R. Eleazar b. R. Shimon.

58. So mss M and O^2. Mss M^3, V^3, Mo^1, and printings read "Rav."

59. "For" is omitted in O^2.

60. On this name (?) see Hyman, *Toledot*, 256–57; Shamma Friedman, "The Enigma of *B'ribbi* as a Talmudic Title" (Hebrew, forthcoming).

61. At least this is how the Bavli *sugya* presents Shmuel's dictum. Jacob Epstein, *MLH*, 711, suggests that the original meaning may have been different.

62. See Rashi, ad loc., s.v. *qetana*. The age of "childhood" is based on bGit 59a,

where opinions ranging from six years to nine years are given, and the Talmud concludes that it depends on the intellect of the child.

63. mNid 5:6; see Rashi, bYev 105b, s.v. *le'onat*.

64. Some scholars consider such *hilkheta* to be of Geonic origin. For present purposes, I am considering all post-Amoraic strata as Stammaitic.

65. This addition, moreover, appears as a superlinear gloss in ms Vatican 111.

66. The other attestations are bSuk 21b and bMen 34b, 99b.

67. S.v. *midevarav*. On the term "Beribbi," see n. 60.

68. So Rashi, ad loc., s.v. *le'onat*; and Rabenu Hananel, cited in *OGP*, Yevamot, 328.

69. See e.g. Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah*, Yibbum, 1:17–18 and 4:16; *Tur*, *Even Ha'ezer*, 167.

70. yYev 12:4, 12d (888).

71. Epstein, *MLH*, 711. So Lieberman, *TK*, 6:136 (to tYev 12:12).

72. On the various positions, see Epstein, *MLH*, 710–11, and Lieberman, *TK*, 6:136 (to tYev 12:12).

73. It should also be noted that the midrash halakha cited by R. Yehuda HaNasi in the Yerushalmi and by R. Ishmael b. R. Yose in the Bavli story is a widespread tradition, appearing several other times in the Bavli, as does the alternate midrash halakha attributed by Shmuel to R. Meir. For the former, see bBB 156a, bNid 52a; for the latter, see bYev 61b, 119a; bBekh 19b; bNid 32a.

Chapter 3 *Ilfa's Desperate Challenge*

1. The story has been relatively neglected in modern scholarship. See the brief analyses by Yonah Fraenkel, *Iyyunim*, 89–91, and David Levine, "Holy Men and Rabbis in Talmudic Antiquity," *Saints and Role Models in Judaism and Christianity*, ed. J. Schwartz and M. Poorthuis (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 53–57; and a somewhat longer study by Chaim Licht, *Ten Legends of the Sages: The Image of the Sage in Rabbinic Literature* (Hoboken, NJ: Ktav, 1991), 181–206.

2. Literally, "were very hard pressed [by poverty]": *dehiqa lahu milta tuva*.

3. *Qayma leih sha'ata*: literally, "The [planetary] hour stands for him." See below, "Sources, Stock Phrases, and Motifs" (4), for additional discussion of the precise meaning of this phrase.

4. This line can also be translated, "Had you sat and studied, he [R. Yohanan] would not be leading [the academy, but you would.]" See Tosafot, ad loc., s.v. *amru*. Pseudo-Rashi, s.v. *i*, explains that Ilfa was more learned than R. Yohanan.

5. On the word *isqara* (= Greek: *istokeria*; some mss read *qerasa* = Greek: *keras*), see Daniel Sperber, *Nautica Talmudica* (Ramat-Gan: Bar Ilan University Press, 1986), 29–31. Sperber explains that Ilfa suspended himself on the sailyard, the hori-

zontal beam that intersects the mast, not the mast itself. Sokoloff, *DJBA*, 122, 1037 follows Sperber.

6. The *baraitot* collected by R. Hiyya and R. Hoshaya are considered most authoritative by the Bavli; see bHul 141a–b, and Rashi, ad loc. See too Hanokh Albeck, *Mehqarim beveraita uvetosefta* (Jerusalem: Rav Kook, 1944), 65–89; Yaakov Elman, *Authority and Tradition: Toseftan Baraitot in Talmudic Babylonia* (New York: Yeshiva University Press, 1994), 172, 244–45.

7. For this use of *pashat* = explain, see bZev 96b; Sokoloff, *DJBA*, 942.

8. This is actually not the reading of the Mishna, but of the Bavli's understanding of the reason behind R. Meir's statement in mKet 6:7, *Let the trustee do that with which he was charged* (see below under "Tradition History.") Pseudo-Rashi, ad loc., s.v. *ha*, focuses on section [b] and explains that, technically, the heirs are entitled to the entire inheritance immediately. Thus, in section [a] they are given the funds even though the testator instructed that they be given less per week. Even in case [b], where the testator specified that they be given *only* one shekel per week, the sages would rule that the heirs be given more than that amount, as it is their rightful inheritance. R. Meir, however, rules that the testator's directive be followed in this case because "it is a commandment to carry out the wishes of the deceased." See below for detailed discussion of the relationship of this *baraita* to the Mishna.

9. That they leave the academy is not explicitly stated at the outset. The students' remark in B1, which uses the technical term *malakh* for leading the academy, makes this clear. Ms Vatican 134 and printings add "Ilfa and R. Yohanan *were studying Torah,*" for the same purpose.

10. See Licht, *Ten Legends*, 192–93.

11. This fact bothered some commentators. Why did R. Yohanan not inform his friend of what he had heard, such that Ilfa would also decide to return? But the storyteller does not appear to have been concerned by this question.

12. See Fraenkel, *Iyyunim,* 89; Licht, *Ten Legends*, 192.

13. Similarly, anyone weakened by sickness or otherwise in danger, such as a soldier in battle, is at risk.

14. Jonathan Schofer, "Protest or Pedagogy? Trivial Sin and Divine Justice in Rabbinic Narrative," *HUCA* 74 (2003), 243–78, has shown that some rabbinic sources portray an inequity between sins and punishments (and meritorious acts and rewards), such that terrible punishments, including martyrdom, are connected to trivial sins. Schofer suggests that these sources primarily serve the pedagogic purpose of promoting ethical living and rabbinic values. According to this line of thought, the harsh punishment envisioned in our story for leaving the academy should be seen in terms of the pedagogic purpose of dissuading students from abandoning full-time Torah study. Nevertheless, the "dangerous place" motif of the story suggests that no punishment would have been possible but for the unsound wall.

15. See n. 4 for Pseudo-Rashi's explanation.

16. See *TS*, 246–47. The stories following that of Ilfa and R. Yohanan in bTa 21a–b are about Nahum of Gamzu, including the famous etiology of his name, "This too (*gam zu*) is for good."

17. Against Licht, *Ten Legends*, 200, I would not say that the ending demonstrates that Ilfa was the sage with a "propitious time" (or "propitious horoscope") nor would I conclude with Fraenkel, *Iyyunim,* 90, that both sages, in the end, enjoy the "propitious time." The story is decidedly ambiguous. See Levine, "Holy Men and Rabbis," 32: "The story breaks off ominously. A tragedy is not necessarily implied, but an upbeat resolution of 'Ilfa's distress is not conveyed."

18. See M. Beer, *The Babylonian Amoraim: Aspects of Economic Life*, 2nd ed. (Ramat-Gan: Bar Ilan University Press, 1982), 258–71 (Hebrew).

19. Actually, the expression "they abandon eternal life and engage in temporal life" is somewhat less apt here, as the peasants are not sages in the academy and have not really "abandoned" (*menihim*) Torah study, except in the sense that in theory they could be studying rather than farming. The Hebrew *manih*, admittedly, has the sense of "leave alone," "neglect," and need not mean "abandon" in the sense that one had been occupied in the activity and desisted. Nevertheless, the expression fits the story of R. Yohanan and Ilfa better, and the storytellers appear more conflicted about sages abandoning the academy than about ordinary Jews not dedicating themselves to Torah study.

20. For the complete source and additional discussion, see *TS*, 130–33, and the notes to those pages.

21. Ibid. Of course it is only Stammaitic sources that express the conflict in terms of study in the *academy* vs. earning a living.

22. The passage appears near the beginning of Tractate Qiddushin because mQid 1:1 parenthetically notes the value of a *peruta*.

23. This is not a case of inheritance but of maintenance. The wife and daughters have no right to the money, and therefore his directive is followed. tKet 6:10, however, reads here "*sela*." See Lieberman, *TK*, 6:283. This issue is not germane to our study.

24. See Lieberman, *TK*, 6:284.

25. See Pseudo-Rashi, bTa 21a, s.v. *ha* and Rashi, bKet 69b, s.v. *ha*. Pseudo-Rashi actually refers to section [c] alone, the case of the testator's proviso that other heirs inherit after the death of his children. But the same logic underpins section [b], namely that despite the heirs' rights, in principle, to the estate, and despite their needs, we may not give them more than is stipulated. Some commentaries offer slightly different explanations, but they are no more satisfactory. See *Shita mequbetset* to bKet 69b.

26. And it is difficult to claim that the "old man's" question was to find the source of section [b] alone. See Halivni, *MM*, 1:211.

27. See Lieberman, *TK*, 6:283.

28. As noted by Levine in "Holy Men and Rabbis," 56 n. 31.

29. See Halivni, *MM*, 1:211.

30. See Jeffrey L. Rubenstein, "The Talmudic Expression: 'Rabbi X, According to His Reasoning, Said,'" *Sidra* 10 (1995), 111–30 (Hebrew); Leib Moscovitz, *Talmudic Reasoning from Casuistics to Conceptualization* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2002).

31. It is also possible, as noted above, that the storytellers wished to employ the boat or ship as an emblem of commerce for its symbolic value. Ilfa suspends himself on his own commercial enterprise to demonstrate that it did not cause him to neglect Torah.

32. In bGit 32b Ravina finds Rav Nahman "leaning against the door bolt" and pondering a question that he could not answer. He is not explicitly said to be upset or distressed, but this seems to be the force of the description of the posture—to inform the audience of the sage's distress at being unable to resolve a certain matter. One exception to this use of the phrase appears in bPes 68b, which relates that Rav Sheshet reviewed his studies every thirty days, whereupon he leaned against a door bolt and said, "Rejoice, my soul! Rejoice, my soul!" Perhaps, then, the posture indicates strong emotion, generally distress but occasionally the opposite. The individual is so overcome by emotion that he needs to support himself by leaning against or "adhering to" (as *tala* more literally translates) the door bolt.

33. See e.g. bShab 33b, bShab 119a.

34. See too e.g. bBer 5b, bBer 8b, bPes 50a, etc.

35. No Amora refers to the version of the story in bKet 69b–70a, so the time of its reworking remains a question. The two changes described above point to the Stammaim. And see "Redactional Context" below.

36. For another example of the BT redactors adding an exposition to explain an apparently unmotivated action in the PT, see *TS*, 127–29.

37. bTa 25a relates that R. Eleazar b. Pedat was "in extreme need." His poverty is not explicitly linked to his studies, but I think that the storyteller knew that this would be understood by his audience, as R. Eleazar b. Pedat was known to be a great sage. bHul 132b tells of a priest in extreme need, and nothing implies that he is a sage.

38. *LevR* 2:6 (44).

39. bBM 33a: "there should be no poor among *you*," i.e., do not let yourself become poor. Also cited at bBM 30b, bSanh 64b.

40. See too *GenR* 91:9 (1133); *MidTan* 23:10 (147).

41. yShab 2:6, 5d (381). Bavli Amoraim cite several proverbs to explain the Mishna, such as, "when the ox falls, sharpen the blade" (bShab 32a). Rashi, s.v. *nafal*, explains: "[When the ox falls] to the ground, it is about to be slaughtered. Then all say: 'sharpen the knife' before it gets back up, and it will be a hassle to throw it

down again. So too, when one is unfortunate, retribution is ready to strike." The Bavli also adds that the corresponding situation for men is when they pass over a bridge or any similar structure (bShab 32a).

42. Parallel at bRH 16b.

43. Sokoloff, *DJBA*, 1091. See too bBer 55b.

44. Elsewhere the Bavli uses the term "presumption of injury" (*qavua hezeqa*) for a precarious situation (bHul 142a = bQid 39b). The *stam* explains that the reason a boy fell and died while shooing away the mother bird at the behest of his father, despite performing these two commandments for which the Torah promises "long life," and despite the principle that "those involved in a mitsvah do not experience harm," was that he climbed an "unsound ladder" (*sulam ra'u'a*). Where a "presumption of injury" exists, even those otherwise deserving of divine protection may experience harm. The *unsound* ladder clearly recalls the unsound house/wall of our *sugya*. Earlier the *sugya* cites a tradition attributed to R. Yannai, which is also found in our *sugya* just before the story (bTa 20b; also in bShab 32a): "Let a man not stand in a dangerous place (*meqom sakana*) and think that a miracle will be done on his behalf. Perhaps a miracle will not be done. And if a miracle is done, it will reduce his merits."

45. Sokoloff, *DJBA*, 996.

46. That the angel envisions the possibility of killing the sage despite this horoscope is no contradiction, as the rabbinic belief in astrology did not entail complete astral determinism. As we will see in Chapter 8, fate was conditional and could be altered through rewards and punishments.

47. Printings and some mss add "since one does not open the *kallah* with fewer than ten." On the *kallah*, see I. Gafni, *Yehudei bavel bitequfat hatalmud* (Jerusalem: Shazar Center, 1990), 198–200, and the references there.

48. Text according to ms Hamburg 165.

49. The translation follows the Soncino printing (1484) except for the phrase mentioned in the following note.

50. According to the mss (Paris 671, Munich 95, Oxford 366). The Soncino and subsequent printings read, "the hour needed them" (*itstrikha lahu sha'ata*). I realize that I have produced an eclectic text here. However, even the reading of the printings should be taken in an astrological sense, with "hour" shorthand for "planetary hour."

51. A "Sinai" apparently refers to a sage with precise knowledge of tradition, as though he were present on Mount Sinai. An "uprooter of mountains" is a sage with great analytical abilities. The "owner of wheat" is also a sage with vast and exact knowledge of traditions, one who has "gathered traditions" like one who stockpiles grain to sell (Rashi, ad loc., s.v. *mari*.).

52. Ms M adds: "Rabbah said, 'If I lead first then will I die after two years?' They

said, 'Yes.' He did not agree to lead the academy . . . ." Other manuscripts lack the line "for the astrologers had said to him, 'you will lead (*malakh*) for [only] two years.'" It is also missing in all mss of the parallel at bHor 14a. See Rabbinovicz, *DQS* to bBer 64a, ad loc.

53. R. Avin's initial dictum perhaps should be taken in some astrological sense as well, i.e., he who forces the *planetary* hour—he who acts against his horoscope.

54. See my forthcoming article, "Astrology and Academic Leadership."

55. See *CBT*, 80–101.

56. It is worth noting that the accounts associating illustrious lineage or dynastic succession with the head of the academy are generally retrojected to the Tannaitic period. The three sources that mention *qayma . . . sha'ata* and associate the head of the academy with horoscopes, by contrast, are told of Amoraim, so they may also provide a window into earlier Stammaitic ideology and the workings of the Stammaitic academy at a period before genealogy became an indispensable criterion for academic leadership.

57. *CBT*, 32–33.

58. Ibid.; bShab 10a; bBes 15b.

59. The two angels also deserve comment. Traditions in bHag 15a (= bTa 11a) and bShab 119b speak of "two ministering angels" (*shnei malakhei hasharet* or *sharet*) who accompany each individual. According to a second tradition at bShab 119b, two angels accompany a person on the Sabbath eve, one a good angel, who rejoices upon seeing the human observing the Sabbath, the other a bad angel, who rejoices when he neglects it. The Maharsha correlates the bad angel with the angel in our story who suggests killing the sages, and the good angel with the angel that insists on sparing their lives. But this identification is probably going too far (and is based partly on the reading of the printings of our story, "two ministering angels.") Other traditions speak of two angels that accompany a man (bTa 11a, bHag 15a), or two angels sent by God for various tasks, *GenR* 65:21 (732–33). Most texts of these three passages read *malakhei hasharet*, though some do not, e.g., ms M of bHag 15a.

60. Cf. Levine, "Holy Men and Rabbis," 56.

61. Why the storytellers chose R. Yohanan rather than another Amora is not completely clear, but it was probably because they (anachronistically) considered him to be the head of the academy of that time. See too bSot 21a which suggests that R. Yohanan received support from the patriarch so that he could study Torah, hence that he was in need of funds.

62. The second story, that of Rav Huna, brings in its wake another tradition that mentions an unsound wall: Rava asks Rafram bar Papa to tell him some of Rav Huna's noble deeds, and Rafram relates that after heavy rains Rav Huna would travel throughout the city and tear down any unsound wall. So one could equally view the *sugya* as structured by five traditions about unsound walls. However, this

tradition is unlike the others in that it does not have to do with the merits of a sage preventing a collapse. Moreover, this tradition follows a list of some of the meritorious deeds of Rav Ada bar Ahava, the other character in the second story, so it is better seen as a second tradition about the great deeds of a sage: the redactors have brought two additional sources about the actions of the two protagonists of that story. But this is a minor point. Whether the primary structure of the *sugya* should be seen as four or five units does not really affect my argument. See too Eli Yassif, *The Hebrew Folktale: History, Genre, Meaning*, trans. J. S. Teitelbaum (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999), 230–31.

63. Licht, *Ten Legends*, 183, writes: "The Talmud is recounting stories about scholars and their behavior near unstable walls and buildings, and our story includes an episode that takes place while scholars are sitting near an unstable wall." See too David Rosenthal, "Early Redactions in the Bavli," *Mehqerei Talmud 1* , ed. Y. Sussman and D. Rosenthal (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1990), 172 n. 30 (Hebrew).

64. The story corresponds most closely to the second story of the Bavli, though there are several significant differences. Rav, not Rav Huna, puts his disciple in an unsound house until it can be emptied. The PT then notes, "and some say he [the disciple] was Rav Ada bar Ahava." We are not told that he became angry. The story seems to contain elements found in both the first and second Bavli stories, as the first Bavli story involves Rav and Rav Ada bar Ahava. That is, the two Bavli stories seem to have devolved from this Yerushalmi tradition.

65. E.g., one of the stories of Nahum of Gamzu appears in yPe 8:9, 21b (111).

66. It should also be noted that the Bavli version is somewhat more violent than that of the PT, including the angel's threat to kill the sages and Ilfa's potential suicide. See *CBT*, 54–56, for violence and Stammaitic culture.

67. See *CBT*, 39–53.

68. Ibid., 49–50; and see n. 51 above, and David Rosenthal, "The Transformation of Eretz-Yisrael Traditions in Babylonia," *Cathedra* 92 (1999), 7–48 (Hebrew).

69. On "constraints," see *TS*, 260–61.

70. For some medieval attestations, see Sperber, *Nautica Talmudica*, 31.

Chapter 4 *Honi's Long Sleep*

1. See Yonah Fraenkel, *The Aggadic Narrative: Harmony of Form and Content* (Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuchad, 2001), 61–62, 183–89 (Hebrew), published earlier in English as "Paronomasia in Aggadic Narratives," *Scripta Hierosolymitana* 27 (1978), 27–51; Gad Ben-Ami Tsarfatti, "Hasidim ve'anshei ma'ase vehaneviim harishonim," *Tarbiz* 26 (1956/7), 149–53; Moses Gaster, *Studies and Texts* (Ktav: New York, 1971), 3:126–67, reprinted from *MGWJ* 30–31 (1880–1881), 79–107; Galit Hasan-Rokem, *Tales of the Neighborhood: Jewish Narrative Dialogues in Late Antiquity* (Berkeley and

Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2003), 109–10, and see the literature mentioned in n. 52; Alan J. Avery-Peck, "The Galilean Charismatic and Rabbinic Piety: The Holy Man in the Talmudic Literature," *The Historical Jesus in Context*, ed. A.-J. Levine et al. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), 151–57.

2. The Psalm (in the rabbinic understanding) was sung by the Jews who returned to the Land of Israel from Babylonia after the first exile, which lasted seventy years (c. 586–516 BCE; see Jer 25:11, 29:10).

3. Mss M and L add here, "He saw his she-ass had given birth to many herds." See chapter appendix, "Manuscript Variants," (2).

4. Ms O reads "Rabbah," but most others and the parallel at bBB 16a read "Rava." As is well known, these names interchange often in the manuscripts.

5. The formula "Thus people say" is used to introduce popular proverbs. Rava means that the story of Honi exemplifies this saying.

6. See Avery-Peck, "The Galilean Charismatic," 156.

7. See e.g. the PT version, cited below in this chapter.

8. Likewise, the mention that his she-ass gave birth to several broods—if an integral part of the text and not an errant gloss (see n. 3 above)—indicates that time has elapsed and generations have come and gone.

9. See *CBT*, 39–53.

10. Ibid., 67–79.

11. That story concludes, "The rabbis prayed for mercy and his soul departed," almost identical to the concluding line of our story.

12. Philip Young, "Fallen from Time: The Mythic Rip Van Winkle," *Kenyon Review* 22 (Winter, 1960), 552–66, esp. 557, in his discussion of the meaning of the lengthy sleep, characterizes the "Talmud's explanation" (by which he means Honi's prayer for death upon not being recognized) as "forced and arbitrary." Young has essentially noticed that the Stammaitic conclusion does not mesh well with the folktale.

13. Fraenkel, "Paronomasia," 37 (*The Aggadic Narrative*, 185).

14. See n. 3.

15. Fraenkel, "Paronomasia," 41 (*The Aggadic Narrative*, 188).

16. *Meshunita* is a very rare word, probably employed here to create the wordplay.

17. Or "Girya." The sage is otherwise unknown. See Hyman, *Toledot*, 618.

18. yTa 3:10, 66d.

19. Gaster, *Studies and Texts,* 3:126–67.

20. I have translated the verb *n-h-r*, literally "to be bright," "to enlighten," idiomatically as "clear." More literally the Bavli reads, "our traditions are as light today," which makes the parallel more evident.

21. So also in mss Oxford 369, Paris 1337, Munich 95, Hamburg 165, and Flor-

ence II-I-7-9. The latter three read "That which the rabbis say" in place of "thus people say."

22. So also in mss Vatican 115 and Escorial I-G-3 (Vatican omits "thus people say").

23. "Death" also fits poorly in Bava Batra, as Job (unlike Honi) did not die, nor is it suggested that he would have died without his friends.

24. Thus, Rashi in Bava Batra, s.v. *o*, explains, "If a man does not have friends (*ohavim*), he would prefer to die," whereas in Taanit, s.v. *o*, Pseudo-Rashi comments, "If a man's colleagues (*haveirav*) do not honor him as in the past, he would prefer to die," and notes, "we do not read 'such as the friends of Job' here, but [only] in Bava Batra, in the context of the story of Job."

25. Fraenkel, "Paronomasia," 36 n. 22 (*The Aggadic Narrative,* 183 n. 25): "R. Yohanan's saying does not belong to our story, but to a story in the Palestinian Talmud or to one that may once have existed and which resembled the story in the Palestinian Talmud." Because [A'] does not mention the verse explicitly, Fraenkel need not excise it too. He chooses as his base text ms M^2, which reads, "slept seventy years" (and does not mention a dream) and therefore need not allude to the "dream" mentioned in the verse cited in [A]. See chapter appendix, "Manuscript Variants." Fraenkel also bases a crucial part of his analysis on readings not found in this manuscript tradition, thus creating a composite text of sorts. See *The Aggadic Narrative,* 186 n. 30.

26. Fraenkel, *The Aggadic Narrative*, 62.

27. Ibid., 184.

28. There follow additional stories of holy men, identified as Honi's son and grandson. See below, "Redactional Context."

29. Why they might have done so is not totally clear. But as noted above, that the introductory and closing statements are attributed to Amoraim creates a parallel structure and distinct boundaries.

30. For some blatant examples, see Halivni, *MM*, 7:57–64.

31. Gaster, *Studies and Texts,* 126–77. The work was first published by J. Rendel Harris as *The Rest of the Words of Baruch* (Cambridge, 1889), then translated and edited by S. E. Robinson in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, ed. J. H. Charlesworth (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1985), 2:413–25. Louis Ginzberg, *Legends of the Jews,* 7 vols. (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1909–38), 6:409–20, notes the connection between this story and Honi, as does Tsarfatti, "Hasidim," 149–53.

32. Robinson, ibid., 414.

33. Diogenes Laertes, 1:109–15; Gaster, ibid., 126; Tsarfatti, "Hasidim," 149–153; A. A. Halevi, *Sha'arei ha'aggada* (Tel Aviv: Guttenberg, 1963), 173–75.

34. See Stith Thompson, *Motif Index of Folk Literature* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1955–58), motif D1960.1. For references see Haim Schwarzbaum,

Studies in Jewish and World Folklore (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1968), 45–46, 449; Moses Gaster, *The Exempla of the Rabbis* (1924; reprint, New York: Ktav, 1968), 264.

35. Gaster, ibid., Young, "Fallen from Time," 551–66.

36. Young, ibid., 547.

37. Ibid., 552–66.

38. See Shmuel Safrai, "Tales of the Sages in the Palestinian Tradition and the Babylonian Talmud," *Scripta Hierosolymitana* 22 (1971), 209–32; Adiel Schremer, "Kinship Terminology and Endogamous Marriage in the Mishnaic and Talmudic Periods," *Zion* 60 (1995), 5–35 (Hebrew).

39. And in several other witnesses; see Henry Malter, *Masekhet ta'anit min talmud bavli* (New York: American Academy for Jewish Research, 1930), 98.

40. The reading *keheilma* would seem to be preferable, as the verse reads "*keholmim*."

41. Ms L, however, reads at A', "Certainly I slept seventy years," like the tradition in ms M.

42. *The Aggadic Narrative*, 187–89.

43. Such as *Hagadot hatalmud*; see Malter, *Masekhet ta'anit*, 99.

Chapter 5 *R. Tsadoq's Firstling*

1. Robert Goldenberg, "The Deposition of Rabban Gamaliel II: An Examination of the Sources," *JJS* 23 (1972), 167–90. Goldenberg was interested more in historical and literary questions than the process of composition.

2. This line is difficult, and the translation uncertain. See below, "Late Elements," (1).

3. A minor difference is that sections 12–13 are omitted in Bekhorot, though they could have been replicated. Section 2 is in Hebrew in Berakhot but Aramaic in Bekhorot.

4. As Goldenberg, "Deposition," 177, says. "It is impossible that two stories should develop independently, and become so similar to one another as this one and the story in Ber."

5. The student is identified in the final line of the story (section O, see below), but at this point in the story he is unidentified and can only be designated "the questioner," "the student," or suchlike.

6. Goldenberg, "Deposition," 177.

7. See *TS*, 255; Rubenstein, "Criteria," 429–33.

8. Halivni, *MM*, 7:29–37, points to numerous *sugyot* with multiple Stammaitic layers that differ and contradict. And see Jay Rovner, "Pseudepigraphic Invention and Diachronic Stratification in the Stammaitic Component of the Bavli: The Case of Sukka 28," *HUCA* 68 (1997), 11–62, which identifies two layers of redactors in halakhic *sugyot*.

9. Classical rhetorical training involved school exercises in which students practiced producing biographical anecdotes or *chreia* by using familiar plot-patterns and changing various elements. See e.g. R. F. Hock and E. N. O'Neil, *The Chreia in Ancient Rhetoric: Volume I: The Progymnasmata* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1986), 35–47. Here, too, the redactors may have practiced their creative capabilities and generated a story by emulating and adapting a familiar narrative.

10. Devora Steinmetz, "Must the Patriarch Know *'Uqtzin?* The *Nasi* as Scholar in Babylonian *Aggada*," *AJSR* 23 (1998), 163–90.

11. I have commented on a few sections of the story in *CBT*, 120–21. And see Boyarin, *Border Lines*, 153–54, 185–89.

12. R. Eleazar applies this principle of temple law—that once an object or sacrifice takes on a certain level of holiness it cannot be reduced to a less holy state—to his situation. Once he has been promoted to the position of head of the academy he will not be demoted.

13. The casks with ashes symbolize unworthy students, students whose insides (personal character) are as worthless as ash.

14. The version of ms Florence printed above does not read smoothly (though a similar reading is found in mss Oxford and Munich. The Vilna printing reads "In Bekhorot (*bivekhorot*, or: 'in the [matter of the] firstlings'), in the incident with R. Tsadoq, he distressed him." Ms Paris reads, "In Bekhorot, he distressed him, in the incident with R. Tsadoq."

15. Louis Ginzberg, *Perushim vehidushim birushalmi,* 4 vols (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary, 1941–47), 3:177, notes that the event actually occurred on Yom Kippur, hence "Rosh HaShana" is better understood as the name of the Tractate.

16. Ginzberg, *Perushim*, 3:177; Goldenberg, "Deposition," 173.

17. Moreover, to simply say "he distressed him last year" seems rather vague. Would the audience have understood the reference?

18. Halivni, "Aspects of the Formation of the Talmud," 345–47, calls this time the Saboraic period.

19. Avraham Weiss, *The Literary Activities of the Saboraim* (Jerusalem, 1953) (Hebrew). Epstein, *MLH*, 989–91, collects the names of tractates mentioned in the Talmuds, including those of our text, suggesting that he agrees with Ginzberg.

20. See n. 14.

21. See page 111.

22. See *CBT*, 97–98.

23. On the translation of *yeshiva* in Palestinian sources, see Goodblatt, *Rabbinic Instruction*, 64–91. Ms M reads "rule" (*namleikh*) in place of "Head of the Academy." This term is standard for "becoming head of the academy." See I. Gafni, "'Yeshiva' and 'Metivta,'" *Zion* 43 (1978), 32–34 (Hebrew).

24. See *CBT*, 20–23; and Jeffrey L. Rubenstein, "The Rise of the Babylonian Talmudic Academy: A Reexamination of the Talmudic Evidence," *Jewish Studies, an Internet Journal* (biu.ac.il/JS/JSIJ/jsij1.html; 2002).

25. See Safrai, "Tales of the Sages" 220–22; David Goodblatt, "The Story of the Plot against R. Simeon B. Gamaliel II," *Zion* 49 (1984), 358–60 (Hebrew).

26. Catherine Hezser, "'The Slave of a Scholar Is Like a Scholar': Stories about Rabbis and Their Slaves in the Babylonian Talmud," *Creation and Composition*, 196–200.

27. See Robert Brody, *The Geonim of Babylonia and the Shaping of Medieval Jewish Culture* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), 41–42; and *TS*, 205–11.

28. Section (i) also contains a pseudo-*baraita*: "It was taught, 'They taught [Tractate] Eduyyot on that day.'"

29. yBer 4:1, 7c–d (35–36). However, this version refers to mYad 3:5 and mKet 4:6.

30. bYom 84b, bYev 16b, bKet 15a, bQid 73a, and bZev 73a and 73b. Cf. tDem 4:10.

31. For references, see Friedman, "Pereq ha'isha rabba," 286 n. 14. For aggadic examples, see Rubenstein, "Criteria," 420–24. On this passage see too Boyarin, *Border Lines,* 186–88.

32. Mss Oxford and Paris read "gnats," *sriqata*, for "ashes." Sokoloff, *DJBA*, 831, translates it "unglazed pitchers full of gnats."

33. See Hayyim Shapira, "The Deposition of Rabban Gamaliel—Between History and Legend," *Zion* 64 (1999), 30–32.

34. See bPes 50b, bNaz 23b, bSot 22b, etc. There are several other glosses in the mss. For example. Ms Paris adds to section k, after "Woe to the generation whose chief you are," the phrase "and woe to the boat whose captain you are," which is borrowed from bBB 91b.

35. See Friedman, "Perek ha'isha rabba," 305–7 (#10); Rubenstein, "Criteria," 433–34.

36. In ms Paris the exchange is reversed such that R. Eleazar b. Azariah expresses the reservations and the wife parries them, encouraging him to accept. This looks to me like an emendation motivated to avoid having a woman quote Mishna and cause a miracle.

37. See *CBT*, 102–21.

Chapter 6 *A Warning to Disciples*

1. Gerald Burns, *Hermeneutics: Ancient and Modern* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), 105–23; David Stern, "Midrash and Indeterminacy," *Critical Inquiry* 15 (1988), 132–62; Menachem Fisch, *Rational Rabbis: Science and Talmudic Culture*

(Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997), 84–96; Devora Steinmetz, "Agada Unbound: Inter-Agadic Characterization of Sages in the Bavli and Implications for Reading Agada," *Creation and Composition*, 296–301.

2. The first story consists primarily of dialogue and may not meet all definitions of "story," though it certainly has a narrative framework. I think it can be called a story because of the potential conflict and latent tension brought out by the juxtaposition with the second story.

3. Shlomo Naeh, "'Make Yourself Many Rooms': Another Look at the Utterances of the Sages About Controversy," *Renewing Jewish Commitment: The Work and Thought of David Hartman*, ed. A. Sagi and Z. Zohar (Jerusalem: Hartman Institute and Hakibbutz Hameuhad, 2001), 851–75 (Hebrew); idem, "On Structures of Memory (and the Forms of Text) in Rabbinic Literature," *Mehqerei Talmud 3*, ed. Y. Sussman and D. Rosenthal (Jerusalem: Magnes, 2005), 543–89 (Hebrew); Boyarin, *Border Lines*, 151–60, 182–85.

4. Translation based on Stern, "Midrash and Indeterminacy," 137–38.

5. See below, "Sources" (2).

6. These areas were not considered part of the Land of Israel proper (not "consecrated"), hence the laws forbidding agricultural labor during the Sabbatical year did not apply here. The sages therefore obligated farmers (who were free to work the land as they wished) to pay the poorman's tithe in the Sabbatical year in order to provide for the needy, who could not collect tithes from areas within the Land of Israel during this year.

7. See Steinmetz, in "Agada Unbound," 298, n. 12, who observes: "Notably, the word *lehaqbil* does not appear in the Mishna and Tosefta Yadaim parallels to the Rabbi Eliezer story. The introduction of this word in the Bavli draws a closer link between the Rabbi Eliezer and Rabbi Yehoshua stories as well as highlighting the other incidences of *q-b-l* in the Rabbi Eliezer section."

8. Ibid., 300.

9. *TS*, 74–75.

10. Naeh, "Make Yourself Many Rooms," 871. The passages are Deut 1:1–6:4, 6:4–9, 11:13–21, 14:22–29, 26:12–19, 17:14–20, 28:1–69. Cf. Stern, "Midrash and Indeterminacy," 159.

11. On the difficulties of this word and possible translations, see Jeffrey H. Tigay, *The JPS Torah Commentary: Deuteronomy* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1996), 245 and 393 n. 47, with further references.

12. The *petihta* form is also noted by Stern in "Midrash and Indeterminacy," 138.

13. Boyarin, *Border Lines*, 158, following the Maharsha (to bHag 3b, s.v. *ve'af*), attributes the homily to R. Yehoshua, apparently understanding that he happily responds to the Torah he hears from his students with a homily of his own. (Unless this is a simple error, as suggested by Steven Fraade, "Rabbinic Polysemy and

Pluralism Revisited: Between Praxis and Thematization," *AJSR* 31 [2007], 31 n. 103.) I think the simpler reading, following Rashi (bHag 3b, s.v. *va'af*), is to take this too as a homily of R. Eleazar b. Azariah reported by students. The response at c', "It is no orphan generation within which R. Eleazar b. Azariah lives," makes better sense as praise by R. Yehoshua for R. Eleazar b. Azariah's homily. The Maharsha's attempt to deal with this line is forced. And see Naeh, "On Structures of Memory," 579 n. 168.

14. Fisch, *Rational Rabbis*, 90.

15. Burns, *Hermeneutics*, 113.

16. See above, n. 6.

17. See, however, n. 37 and the variants to this line.

18. The slight disjunction between the question and answer—that the question invites the report of a new teaching but the response suggests all is known by tradition—devolves from the Bavli's reworking of the original Tannaitic source. See below, "Sources."

19. It is somewhat difficult that the issue which R. Eliezer claims was revealed to Moses on Sinai appears to be contingent on a later historical event, the extent of the conquest after the return from Babylonia, and on a rabbinic legal innovation designed to help the poor (see n. 6). See the discussion in Christine Hayes, "*Halakhah le-Moshe mi-Sinai* in Rabbinic Sources: A Methodological Case Study," *The Synoptic Problem in Rabbinic Literature*, ed. Shaye J. D. Cohen (Providence, RI: Scholars Press, 2000), 70–71 and n. 15; and Shmuel Safrai, "Halakha lemoshe misinai—historiya o tei'ologia," *Mehqerei Talmud1*, ed. Y. Sussman and D. Rosenthal (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1990), 11–17, 31–38, both with further references.

20. On this translation of the Hebrew, "do not *tahushu* (= pay attention) to your vote," see below, "Sources" (1), and n. 36.

21. *SifDeut* #41 (86). This exegesis follows a version of R. Eleazar b. Azariah's third homily in the same *pisqa*.

22. *CBT*, 54–66.

23. See Saul Lieberman, *Studies in Palestinian Talmudic Literature*, ed. D. Rosenthal (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1991), 511 (Hebrew).

24. The locution "because of an incident that occurred," is distinctly Babylonian, and most often found in the redactional stratum. See e.g. bHag 22b, bYom 28a, etc. In some instances it appears that this language was interpolated into Amoraic dicta, e.g., bBes 15a and bYev 116b. This term deserves comprehensive study.

25. See *CBT*, 23–28, especially p. 27, for an example in which the storytellers essentially feel compelled to explain why they cannot locate the story in an academy.

26. See Richard Kalmin, *Jewish Babylonia between Persia and Roman Palestine* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 92–94.

27. On the basis of the Bavli, Lieberman, in *TK,* 8:681, adds, "But [if you might think that just as the nail] does not diminsh [as it is pounded into wood] and does

not increase [so too the words of the Torah]—therefore the text says . . .." But this does not appear in the Tosefta manuscripts. See Naeh, "Make Yourself Many Rooms," 861 n. 48.

28. I quote only the conclusion of the Mishna, which begins with an extended debate on the issue. For a detailed analysis of the Mishna, see Menahem Kahana, "On the Fashioning and Aims of the Mishnaic Controversy," *Tarbiz* 73 (2003), 51–64 (Hebrew).

29. See *CBT*, 54–55.

30. Shamma Friedman, *Tosefta Atiqta: Pesah Rishon* (Ramat-Gan: Bar Ilan University Press, 2002).

31. The source of the motif of receiving and replacing an eye may be the story of Shimon b. Shetah at yHag 2:2, 77d. A sage sent to Shimon is instructed to perform a sign: "Put your hand on your eye and remove it, and (then) return it, and it will return." (However, when he arrives, Shimon b. Shetah tells him the sign is unnecessary.) The story does not appear in the Bavli, but may have been known by the redactors.

32. See Hayes, "*Halakhah le-Moshe mi-Sinai*," 70: R. Eliezer "weeps in relief and declares that the rabbis need not be apprehensive about their ruling." Saul Lieberman, *Tosefet Rishonim* (1937–39; reprint, New York: Jewish Theological Seminary, 1999),4:158 (to tYad 2:16), observes that "the Tosefta here conflicts with the *baraita* in Hagigah that relates that R. Eliezer became angry at R. Yose b. Dormaskit." See too Kahana, "On Fashioning and Aims," 61–62, n. 48.

33. See Menahem Kister, "Wisdom Literature and Its Relation to Other Genres," *Sapiential Perspectives: Wisdom Literature in Light of the Dead Sea Scrolls*, ed. J. J. Collins et al. (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 21–22.

34. See Kahana, "On Fashioning and Aims," 61–62, nn. 46–48 (though Kahana believes the Mishna is somewhat more ambiguous).

35. Cf. Rabenu Hananel, ad loc.: "R. Eliezer became angry because he told him that they voted and resolved, as if to say, 'why did they vote—it is a law revealed to Moses on Sinai.'"

36. On such disjunctions, see *TS*, 260–61. However, according to Kahana, "On Fashioning and Aims," 61–62, nn. 46–47, citing M. Moreshet, *Leqsiqon hapoel shenithadesh bileshon hatannaim* (Ramat-Gan: Bar Ilan University Press, 1981), 174–75, and with further references, there is a conflation between the roots חוש ("to be troubled, to suffer") and חשש ("to worry, to be anxious") in rabbinic Hebrew such that both verbs can sustain both meanings. At all events, the meaning of the word shifts from the Mishna to the Bavli.

37. From a source-critical perspective the explanation is undoubtedly a later addition to R. Eliezer's statement, but from a purely literary perspective it should be understood as the continuation of R. Eliezer's speech. There is no clear indication

that another speaker or narrative voice begins. Hence I have continued the quotation until the end.

38. Shamma Friedman, *Talmud Arukh: BT Bava Mezia VI*, 2 vols. (Jerusalem: Jewish Theological Seminary, 1990–96), 1:9.

39. Ibid. Friedman also notes that the Tosafot, bMeg 10a, s.v. *dekulei*, already realized that the latter portion of the *baraita* ("what is the reason . . .") is not the statement of R. Eliezer, but rather was added by the "*gemara*," i.e., what we would call the redactors (*gemara hu deka'amar lah*).

40. See n. 3.

41. Naeh, "Make Yourself Many Rooms," 861–64. Fraade, "Rabbinic Polysemy," 31–37, offers a different reading of the Tosefta, understanding it as a continuous sequence rather than as the amalgamation of two separate midrashim, and as dealing with the problem of contradictions or "multivocality" (as in the BT) rather than memory. I favor Naeh's interpretation because it makes for a much smoother reading of the Tosefta, which requires too much "reading in" to be read consecutively. I am also impressed with the evidence based on the redactional context of the parallel to the Tosefta in *ARNA* 18 (67–68), which deals with mnemonic techniques. The appearance of the Toseftan passage makes no sense in this context unless it originally had to do with memory, as in Naeh's interpretation (although in its current form in *ARNA*, the text has been corrupted on the basis of the BT). See Naeh, "On Structures of Memory," 575 n. 150 (cf. pp. 566–68). Naeh also brings compelling evidence that the formulae used in section v of the Tosefta ("So-and-so permits") typically refer to texts, and therefore to the problem of memorization, not disagreement (p. 574.)

42. Naeh, "Make Yourself Many Rooms," 861–68.

43. See Fraade, "Rabbinic Polysemy," 32 n. 108, for discussion of this difficult phrase.

44. Naeh, "Make Yourself Many Rooms," 863–64.

45. Ibid., 865–68.

46. Ibid., 867 and n. 70, citing Mary Carruthers, *The Book of Memory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 33–35.

47. Naeh, ibid., 871–72. In "On Structures of Memory," 576–77, Naeh suggests that the original reading of the Tosefta lacked the final prooftext ("all these words"), which was added under the influence of the Bavli.

48. Naeh, "Make Yourself Many Rooms," 859–60 (and "On Structures of Memory," 581), points out that there remains a disjunction in the Bavli. The answer that all the opinions were given on Mount Sinai (vi), a claim about the origin or authority of the law, does not read smoothly with the question "how then should I learn Torah?"(v), which really pertains to one's capability to learn and to grapple with the

problem of contradictory opinions. To relate the question to the answer requires some "reading in," such as that in my discussion above.

49. See Naeh, "Make Yourself Many Rooms," 872–73, and "On Structures of Memory," 581–82, on how and why the exegeses were ordered in this way in the Tosefta and how they were revised in the Bavli. Naeh also points out that the solution given by the Tosefta in section v that consists of citations from the Torah as models for the memorization process ("words," "these words," etc.) was deleted from the Bavli, as it no longer fit in its present form, though part of it was transferred to the end of section vi as an additional prooftext for the origin of all opinions on Sinai—"And God spoke *all* these words (Exod 20:1)."

50. Naeh, "Make Yourself Many Rooms," 864, collects these traditions.

51. Naeh, ibid., 874.

52. Boyarin, *Border Lines*, 151–64. Boyarin takes as his methodological underpinnings my claims in *TS* and *CBT* concerning the Stammaitic academy as the social location in which many of these late stories were produced. Fraade, in "Rabbinic Polysemy," criticizes Boyarin for postulating too radical a break between the BT and earlier rabbinic sources in this regard and claims that some Tannaitic sources express similar ideas, albeit in less vivid terms than does the BT. While Fraade's arguments have much to recommend them, the type of "multivocality" at issue here (as opposed to the idea that one biblical verse yields several conflicting interpretations, and suchlike) appears only in our Toseftan passage, for which I prefer Naeh's interpretation (see n. 41). Even if Fraade is correct, we still see a distinct Stammaitic ideology, though one that differs less drastically from that of earlier sages.

53. tHag, 2:9, tSot 14:9, tSanh 7:1.

54. The only direct parallels appear in later works dependent on the Bavli, such as *Numbers Rabbah* 14:4. I consider *ARNA* 18 (and *ARN* in general) to be dependent on the Bavli, or sufficiently tainted to be of little use for source-critical purposes. In many cases *ARNA* drew directly on the Bavli or the text was later changed to conform to that of the Bavli. And see above, n. 41, on the *ARNA* parallel here.

55. mEd 4:8, tYev 1:10–11; see Naeh, "Make Yourself Many Rooms," 853–57.

56. However, here too the parallel version in the PT differs, in that the Palestinian sages read phony passages from the Torah, rather than issuing phony rulings. So the image of contradictory rulings is distinctly Babylonian. See *CBT*, 24–25.

57. The directive to "make your ear like a hopper" appears in an Amoraic dictum at bHul 89a: "R. Yohanan said in the name of R. Eleazar b. R. Shimon: Wherever you find the words of R. Eliezer b. R. Yose Haglili make your ear like a hopper." The Bavli version of the homily could well have borrowed from this source, as the "hopper" analogy appears nowhere else in classical rabbinic literature to the best of my knowledge.

58. bBer 27b–28a. See Burns, *Hermeneutics*, 108: "The allusion here is to a historic controversy that resulted in a revolt of a number of rabbis against the Patriarch, Rabban Gamaliel II." Fisch, *Rational Rabbis*, 89: "[T]his allusion to the tri-weekly rotation (Rabban Gamaliel was to preside, according to the Bavli, for three Sabbaths for each of R. Eleazar's one) clearly places the story in the immediate context of R. Eleazar's reforms." (Fisch claims that Stern also sees the passage as an allusion, but Stern's position, "Midrash and Indeterminacy," 156, is more nuanced.) Boyarin, *Border Lines*, 185: "The question 'Whose Sabbath was it?' is an explicit allusion to another Talmudic legend." Cf. Steinmetz, "Agada Unbound," 309, which more appropriately describes the two stories as a "network."

59. Perhaps some of the scholarly misunderstanding results from imprecision in the definition of "allusion." For discussion of allusion and how it differs from intertextuality, see Benjamin D. Sommer, *A Prophet Reads Scripture: Allusion in Isaiah 40–66* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), 6–18.

60. See *TS*, 271; *CBT*, 97–98.

61. So says Lieberman, *TK*, 8:680, who notes that the parallels in *Mekhilta*, *Bo*, #16 (58) and yHag 3:4, 18d read "Who spent the Sabbath there?" (*mi shavat sham*). See J. N. Epstein, *Mevo'ot lesifrut hatannaim* (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1957), 427, for a different explanation.

62. That is, Deut 31:12 commands children (*taf*) to appear (for *haqhel*), hence certainly minors (*qatan*) should also be obligated (for *re'iah*), as the term "minor" apparently indicates greater age than "children."

63. See *Pnei Moshe*, ad loc.

64. See mSot 7:2 and 7:8 (the Mishna refers to *haqhel* as "the paragraph of the king"), tSot 7:7, bSot 41a–b.

65. See Rashi, bHag 3a, s.v. *lehaqbil*. Cf. *Qorban ha'edah* to yHag 1:1, 75d.

66. As Peter Brown has proposed. And see Marc Hirschman, "Changing Focal Points of Sanctity," *Tura* 1 (1989), 109–18 (Hebrew).

67. See the literature cited in *TS*, 314–15, n.1

68. See *TS*, 275–77; *CBT*, 67–79.

Chapter 7 *A Warning to Masters*

1. See the fine article by H. Stourdzé, "La fuite en Egypte de Josue b. Perahya," *REJ* 82 (1926), 133–56, with references to earlier historians (Graetz, Jost, Halevy, etc.). Stourdzé debunks much of the historicity of the passage and reconstructs part of the tradition history. (Though here, as in many such cases of early scholarship, the author rejects the historicity *not* by arguing that the genre of the source is fiction or suchlike, but because of contradictions with known historical events.)

2. See R. Travers Herford, *Christianity in Talmud and Midrash* (1903; reprint,

Clifton, NJ: Reference Book Publishers, 1996), 52–54; Jacob Z. Lauterbach, "Jesus in the Talmud," *Rabbinic Essays* (New York: Ktav, 1951), 477–88.

3. For example, Johann Maier, *Jesus von Nazareth in der talmudischen Überlieferung* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1978), 104–29, is among the best studies to devote serious attention to the literary aspects of the traditions and consideration of the compositional process. Unfortunately, his work is also extremely flawed, partly because he lacked all the manuscript evidence, and it combines solid insights with untenable claims. See David Goldenberg's review, "Once More Jesus in the Talmud," *JQR* 73 (1982), 79–80. Peter Schaefer, "'From Jerusalem the Great to Alexandria the Small': The Relationship between Palestine and Egypt in the Graeco-Roman Period," *The Talmud Yerushalmi and Graeco-Roman Culture*, ed. Peter Schaefer (Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 1998), 129–40, also pays some attention to literary dimensions of the source but cannot resist attempting to discern a historical kernel. See too Schaefer's recent study, *Jesus in the Talmud* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), 34–40. Stephen Gero, "The Stern Master and His Wayward Disciple: A 'Jesus' Story in the Talmud and in Christian Hagiography," *JSJ* 25 (1994), 287–311, which I will discuss below, provides copious bibliographical references, as does Maier, pp. 317–38, and as Schaefer, *Jesus*, 191–201, does for more recent works.

4. *Diqduqei soferim hashalem: The Babylonian Talmud with Variant Readings: Tractate Sotah*, ed. Abraham Liss (Jerusalem: Yad Harav Herzog: Institute for the Complete Israeli Talmud, 1979). I have not provided detailed philological discussions, as this ground has been well trodden in the scholarship mentioned in the preceding notes.

5. Most mss read "Elisha went (*vayelekh*)," although the Bible reads "Elisha came (*vayavo*)." See the variants in the appendix.

6. This clause does not appear in ms M, my base text, but appears in a few other text witnesses. See the ms variants.

7. The Aramaic *aksania* can mean both "inn" and (female) "innkeeper." Joshua means the former, but Jesus misunderstands him for the latter.

8. The term *amar mar* usually introduces part of a *baraita* that has been cited previously. Here, however, the *baraita* appears in bSanh 43a. See below in this chapter.

9. This tradition confirms Jesus's confession that he led the many to sin (ff2).

10. See e.g. the collections of stories in bSanh 11a and bYom 35b. Cf. Chapter 9, where the integration of a biblical character and rabbinic sage, Moses and R. Akiva, in the *same* story is unique.

11. See Joshua Levinson, *The Twice-Told Tale* (Jerusalem: Magnes, 2005), 239–307 (Hebrew).

12. JPS translates thus: "Is this a time to *take* money in order to *buy* clothing and

olive groves . . . (2 Kgs 5:25–26)." In biblical Hebrew, however, *laqah* rarely means "buy," though it can mean "get, procure." Cf. the Septuagint on this verse, which translates both appearances of *laqah* with *elabes*, "take." The meaning of *laqah* as being related to purchasing is much more common in rabbinic Hebrew. On this linguistic shift from biblical to rabbinic Hebrew, see Abba Bendavid, *Biblical Hebrew and Mishnaic Hebrew* (Tel Aviv: Dvir, 1971), 67, 100, 352 (Hebrew).

13. See e.g. bQid 39b: "There is no reward for the commandments in this world." However, as with any matter of theology, rabbinic ideas are not systematic, hence one can occasionally find the opposite opinion.

14. Troubled by the vicarious punishment of Gehazi's sons, the commentary *Ets Yosef* in *Eyn Yaakov* (to bSot 47a) explains that the sons knew what Gehazi was doing but did not protest against his actions. Instead of "reading in" some such justification, we should see the inappropriate cursing of the sons as an aspect of the overly harsh rebuff.

15. Cf. Burke Long, *2 Kings* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1991), 101–2: "This unit begins with an abrupt shift in characters, subject matter, and locale. . . . The narrative opens in medias res and offers only the barest essentials of background information."

16. I follow the old JPS here. The new JPS tries to enhance the connection between the phrases by translating, "Elisha arrived at Damascus *at a time when* King Ben-hadad of Aram was ill."

17. Scholars typically consider the king to be Jehoram, who is mentioned in 2 Kgs 8:16–24, based on the general context.

18. Elisha b. Abuya commits a similar sin, convincing young students of Torah to abandon their studies, in yHag 2:1, 77b.

19. mAvot 4:2.

20. See Yonah Fraenkel, "Hermeneutic Problems in the Study of the Aggadic Narrative," *Tarbiz* 47 (1978)," 157–63 (Hebrew); Rubenstein, *TS*, 254–55.

21. Thus, several textual variants cited by Liss, *Sotah*, 300 n. 113, read "he held back the sages from the study house" (*bet midrash*).

22. As Gero, in "Stern Master," points out, there is some degree of rabbinization already in the PT, and the process continues in the BT.

23. See Chapter 8.

24. See the story of Abdan analyzed in Chapter 2 for another example of a protracted exposition.

25. That rabbinic figures are related through kinship is a well-known Bavli motif. For references see *TS*, 318 n. 37 and 354 n. 59.

26. In that Jesus's initial transgression resulted from a misunderstanding, there is a certain affinity between Jesus and Elisha b. Abuya of the Bavli (but not the Yerushalmi). Elisha makes an unfortunate utterance in the presence of the angel

Metatron, who rejects him and his merits (bHag 15a). David Brodsky has pointed out to me that the two passages have in common the name Elisha and the character claiming he cannot repent and quoting a prooftext to that effect. On the Elisha b. Abuya story see *TS,* 71–72, and n. 18 above.

27. Astutely noted by Herford, *Christianity in Talmud*, 54. Several text witnesses accordingly add "in the presence of ten [men]" in order to enhance the magnitude of the sin. See Liss, *Sotah*, 303, apparatus to line 39 and n. 162. But the redactor had already addressed this difficulty by appending the final *baraita*.

28. The academy itself is not mentioned explicitly, so the social setting could also be disciple-circles. I mention the academy because of the evidence of Stammaitic composition presented below.

29. Mark 11:21, John 4:31, etc.

30. bGit 57a.

31. *Mekh*, *Amalek*, 1 (193); *MekhRSBY* 18:6 (130).

32. See Menahem Kahana, *The Two Mekhiltot on the Amalek Portion* (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1999), 204–8 (Hebrew), where Kahana discusses a related tradition about Gehazi found in both *Mekhilta* and *Mekhilta RSBY* and notes that the source has been abbreviated. He seems to suggest that the editors abbreviated the account because of its negative depiction of Gehazi.

33. A parallel, with some variants, is found at yHag 2:2, 77d. I cite the text according to the geniza fragment of ySanh published by Moshe Assis, "A Fragment of Yerushalmi Sanhedrin," *Tarbiz* 46 (1977), 82–83, also adopted for the edition of the Yerushalmi published by the Israel Academy of Hebrew Languages, p. 1293. (The passage about Gehazi appears on pp. 1324–25.)

34. See Sokoloff, *DJPA*, 580 (and correct "Elijah" to "Elisha").

35. These words of the disciples in the 2 Kgs 6:1 are interpreted as their reaction to the sight of Gehazi sitting at the doorway. They conclude that the study-house was already full, "too cramped," for them to attend.

36. The exegesis seems to refer to the blemished skin that will be Gehazi's punishment. Or it could be a hint that Gehazi's intentions were "blemished," depraved.

37. Gehazi took from Naaman the reward that Elisha would otherwise have received, in either this world or the next, for curing his leprosy. Alternatively, the *Qorban Ha'edah* suggests that by refusing material reward, Elisha had been "rewarded" with sanctifying God's name (*qiddush hashem*), but Gehazi had destroyed that achievement by receiving the payment.

38. The phrase "and gold" does not appear in the Masoretic text.

39. Rabbinic law (following Lev 13) distinguishes two stages in the process of becoming a leper. When skin discolorations first appear but there are no "signs of impurity," as described in Lev 13, one has the status of a "restricted" (*musgar*) leper and must be quarantined. The priest returns after one week to determine whether

the "signs of impurity" have appeared. If they have, then one's status changes to a "confirmed" (*muhlat*) leper, who is not deemed pure until the signs disappear (mMeg 1:7, mNeg 3:1). There may also be a pun on the term "confirmed (*muhlat*) sinner"; see bYom 86b.

40. *Aguma*, "alone, forlorn, sorrowful." Marcus Jastrow (*A Dictionary of the Targumim, the Talmud Babli and Yerushalmi and the Midrashic Literature* [1903; reprint, New York: Jastrow Publishers, 1967], 1042,) takes it as synonymous with *aguna*: "How long yet shall my husband dwell with thee (Alexandria) and I (Jerusalem) sit a living widow in my own home."

41. The geniza fragment reads "street" (*israta* = Latin, *strata*), although yHag reads "boat" (*ilfa*). See Assis's note in "Fragment," ad loc.

42. Following Assis, "Fragment," 55; Sokoloff, *DJPA*, 540; Gero, "Stern Master," 300 n. 34.

43. The geniza fragment of ySanh reads "died." The parallel at yHag reads "departed" (*azal*), though "departed" sometimes is used for "died."

44. Note that both sections of the PT open with the parallel phrase "at the time."

45. It should be noted that the PT uses the verb "push away" (*dahah*; E, F, G), whereas the BT construes the main activity as a "rebuff" (*dahaf*; 0, 1), though it also uses "push away" several times (1, e3, dd2, 2). The verbs have a similar meaning, though "to rebuff" has a slightly stronger sense, consistent with the main theme of the BT.

46. Moreover, the PT recounts but two sicknesses; the BT knows three.

47. See Sokoloff, *DJPA*, 502–3.

48. The PT follows the Bible to some extent, as the prophet-disciple relationship typically was perceived by rabbinic eyes as a sage-disciple relationship.

49. I take Judah b. Tabai's reference to hospitality in terms of an inn or lodging at which they stayed during the return. It can also be taken to refer to the good hospitality they received in their lodging place in Alexandria.

50. See below, n. 57.

51. In context, the expression "burns his dish in public" clearly refers to heresy or sin. It derives from mGit 9:10, at least in its literal sense. For discussion of the expression (and this passage in general), see Schaefer, *Jesus in the Talmud*, 26–28 (where he explains the expression in terms of sexual misconduct), and the references there.

52. Text according to ms Oxford 366. Ms Paris is similar. The reference to Jesus has been censored from other mss and the printings.

53. As Schaefer has noted in *Jesus in the Talmud*, 31, this tradition about Jesus was probably transferred from bSanh 103a, where it appears verbatim, though linked to a different verse. The break in form from "that our company not be like" to "not be among us a son (!) or disciple" suggests its secondary presence here.

54. It is unlikely that the bBer 17a–b tradition postdates and draws on our story, for were that the case, it would probably be formulated in terms of the "company of Joshua b. Perahia," parallel to the company of Saul, David, and Elisha. Cf. the previous note.

55. There is also an association between lepers and heretics that may lurk in the background and help associate Jesus with Gehazi. (Of course the biblical Gehazi, a leper, is already rabbinized into a heretic by mSanh 10:2.) bSanh 97a employs a prooftext about leprosy for an exegetical tradition about heresy. The leper is also grouped with the *menudeh*, the person under a ban, in bMQ 15b, a category that would include, though not be limited to, heretics. See too the causes of leprosy in bArakh 16a. For medieval Christian associations between the two, see Robert Ian Moore, *The Formation of a Persecuting Society*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Blackwell, 2007), 58–61, with further references.

56. Jacob Neusner, *The Rabbinic Traditions about the Pharisees before 70*, 3 vols. (Leiden: Brill, 1971), 1:86.

57. It also has been suggested that the change may be due to a tradition attributed to Joshua b. Perahia in bMen 109b: "At first, whoever would say to me, 'Go up to it [an office],' I would tie him up and put him before a lion. Now, whoever says to me, 'Give it [your office] up,' I pour a kettle of hot water upon him." The perspective expressed in the first half of this ironic saying matches Judah b. Tabai's reluctance in the PT to assume office. Moreover, the immediately preceding traditions on bMen 109b deal with the case of Honyo (Onias) and his brother Shimei, who are jockeying for the high priesthood, and the flight of Honyo to Alexandria. Thus, the saying of Joshua b. Perahia in conjunction with traditions about a flight to Alexandria may have induced the storyteller, deliberately or accidentally, to make Joshua the protagonist. The problem with this theory is that the theme of avoiding high office appears only in the PT version, not the BT, so it is problematic to make Joshua b. Perahia's association with such traditions the cause of his appearance in the BT. For another suggestion relating to Joshua b. Perahia's association with magic, see Schaefer, *Jesus in the Talmud*, 37–40; Dan Jaffé, *Le Talmud et les origines juives du christianisme: Jésus, Paul et les judéo-chrétiens dans la littérature talmudique* (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 151.

58. Joseph Klausner, *Jesus of Nazareth*, trans. H. Danby (1925; reprint, New York: Menorah, 1979), 25–26.

59. See too bHor 13b-14a, and *TS*, 176–211.

60. Herford, *Christianity in Talmud*, 53. This possibility is attributed to Isidore Levy and is mentioned in a footnote by Stourdzé in "La fuite en Egypte," 4, and by Klausner in *Jesus of Nazareth*, 25–26. See too Jaffé, *Le Talmud*, 151; and see Sinai (Tarans) Turan, "A Neglected Rabbinic Parallel to the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 6:22–23; Luke 11:34–36)," *JBL* 127 (2008), 81–93. Turan posits a parallel

to the story found at bTa 24a, and then, in an appendix, remarks on some points of contact with our story of Jesus and Joshua b. Perahia, especially the common use of *trutot* (slanted) to describe the eyes. Remarkably, Turan does not mention the possible parallel to the Matthean story of Herod, which might have bolstered his argument.

61. See Holger Zelletenin, "Rabbinizing Jesus, Christianizing the Son of David: the Bavli's Approach to the Secondary Messiah Traditions," in *Discussing Cultural Influences*, ed. Rivka Ulmer (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2007), 99–128; Shlomo Naeh and Moshe Halbertal, "Ma'yanei hayeshu'a: Satira parshanit uteshuvat haminim," in *Higayon L'Yona: New Aspects in the Study of Midrash, Aggadah and Piyyut, in Honor of Yonah Fraenkel*, ed. Joshua Levinson (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 2006), 179–98 (Hebrew); Israel Yuval, *Two Nations in Your Womb* (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1998).

62. If the BT storytellers were playing off Gospel traditions, then an additional factor may have contributed to the creation of the "Shema" episode. The storytellers manifest the monotheistic creed proclaimed by the Shema as opposed to the Trinitarian heresy of Christianity, which the audience would have had in mind when hearing of Jesus. But I would not press this point too far.

63. Some mss do not claim that Shimon b. Shetah was her brother. See the following note.

64. The passage reads as follows (according to ms Florence II I 7–9): "King Yannai and the queen were eating together. He said, 'Who will get us someone to recite the blessing for us?' His wife said to him, 'What can I do for you, since you killed all the rabbis. But swear to me that if I bring you someone that you won't harm him.' He swore to her. She brought him Shimon b. Shetah, her brother. He (Yannai) seated him (Shimon) between him and her. He (Yannai) said to him, 'Do you see what honor I have shown you?' He (Shimon) said to him, 'You do not honor me, but rather the Torah honors me. . . .'" The words, "her brother" appear in mss Oxford, Paris, and the first edition. They are lacking in ms M.

65. See the variants in the appendix, and see Liss, *Sotah*, 301 and n. 126.

66. Identifying anonymous biblical figures with known personae is a well-known tendency of rabbinic midrash. I wonder if we have a similar tendency in later versions of rabbinic narratives vis-à-vis earlier ones.

67. bBer 48a reads: כמה יקרא עבדינא לך. Ms M of bSot 47a, my base text, reads: קום קמיהו שפיר ביקר'. But some variants read almost the same as bBer 48a. For example, Ms O reads: עבדו ליה יקרא.

68. bKer 28b, following ms M; parallel at bPes 57a–b. The Vatican and London mss of bKer 28b identify the king as Yannai, though in ms Oxford he is an anonymous king, as he is in all mss of bPes 57a–b.

69. See bShab 102b, bEruv 15a, and bBB 152b.

70. As noted already by Stourdzé, "La fuite en Egypte," 150–51.

71. See Sol Finesinger, "The Shofar," *HUCA* 8–9 (1931–32), 223–25.

72. So read most mss. Printings and some mss read "finger."

73. The exact formulation varies in the mss.

74. Parallel at bAZ 53b. Scholars who sought evidence of Babylonian idolatrous practices in this description of Jesus's sin failed to recognize that simply borrowing from other Bavli passages is responsible; see the references in Gero, "Stern Master," 305 n. 41; Jaffé, *Le Talmud*, 146–47.

75. bSanh 43a.

76. It is less likely that our storytellers borrowed from a collection of *baraitot* rather than from bSanh 43a (i.e., from the same collection from which bSanh 43a borrowed), given the absence of any such *baraita* in our extant Tannaitic compilations. Indeed, the passage in bSanh 43a itself is probably a narrative pseudo-*baraita*, as they are relatively common in the BT. However, the issue of the source of the storytellers' borrowing is secondary and does not impact my main contention. Neusner, *Rabbinic Traditions*, 1:102, argues that the tradition is attested already by Justin Martyr, but Justin's knowledge of some Jewish traditions about Jesus prove nothing about this specific source.

77. As noted by Maier, *Jesus von Nazareth*, 113–14.

78. As noted above, the passage about Yannai at bBer 48a may also be a factor here.

79. Stourdzé's claim in "La fuite en Egypte," 135–36, that the version in bSotah shows evidence of stylistic improvement, hence the version in bSanhedrin is more original, must be rejected, as it is based on incomplete knowledge of the manuscripts and unproven criteria. The same can be said for Maier's discussion, *Jesus von Nazareth*, 118–27.

80. So read ms Kaufman and most text witnesses. There are some variants.

81. Assuming the storyteller intends that Jesus share the same fate as Gehazi.

82. For a similar case, see the story of Qamtsa and Bar Qamtsa, bGit 55b–56b, redacted in the Talmudic discussion of mGit 5:6. Besides the substantive connections between the story and the Mishna, which I have discussed in *TS,* 160–65, there is a verbal link between the Mishna's mention of the "law of the *siqariqon*" and the name of the chief bandit, Abba Siqra.

83. Maier, *Jesus von Nazareth*, 105–8, provides helpful charts illustrating the differing order.

84. As noted by Stourdzé, "La fuite en Egypte," 135.

85. See the variants, and see Liss, *Sotah*, 297, apparatus to line 16 and n. 70.

86. Unless this change is due to the "corrections" of medieval scribes.

87. Maier's reconstruction of the text history (*Jesus von Nazareth*, 121–22) cannot be accepted. See David Goldenberg's review (this chapter n. 3), pp. 81–82.

88. And which ultimately originates in the Tannaitic traditions found in the *Mekhilta* and *Mekhilta RSBY* cited above.

89. *JSJ* 25 (1994), 287–311

90. I.e., Epiphanius.

91. There may be another connection between motifs in Cyril's "Life of Sabas" and rabbinic traditions. In section 46 (ed. Price, pp. 146–47), Sabas performs a miracle of turning vinegar into wine. Oded Irshai, "From Oblivion to Fame: The History of the Palestinian Church (135–303 CE)," *Christians and Christianity in the Holy Land: From the Origins to the Latin Kingdom* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2006), 124–25, notes the connection between a similar anecdote and the story of Hanina b. Dosa in bTa 25a.

92. "How beautiful" is Gero's translation ("Stern Master," 296 n. 23), which he argues better fits the context and the late Greek than does Price's.

93. See n. 99.

94. Gero's claim that the identification with Jesus occurs at a very late date and results from the BT's borrowing from *Toledot Yeshu* must be rejected outright. (For a similar suggestion, see Maier, *Jesus von Nazareth*, 129.) There is not one shred of evidence that *Toledot Yeshu* existed in written form in Babylonian in the seventh century, as Gero claims it did, nor that the Bavli knew it. (He bases these claims on speculations in two other articles: "Jewish Polemic in the Martyrium Pionii and a 'Jesus' Passage from the Talmud," *JJS* 29 [1978], 165 n. 5, and "The Nestorius Legend in the Toledoth Yeshu," *Oriens Christianus* 59 [1975], 120. But the "evidence" presented is weak and inconclusive). Gero insists that the Bavli cannot be the source of *Toledot Yeshu* because of the elaborate tales of Joshua b. Perahia and Jesus found there: "Only special pleading would assert that all of this material is simply spun out of one detail of the 'Joshua' story" (i.e., of the 'Joshua' story of the Talmud, p. 307). But no special pleading is needed: here, as in many other cases, later midrashic and historiographic texts expand Bavli traditions at great length. Gero's claim in any case begs the question, what is the source of the Joshua-Jesus stories of *Toledot Yeshu* from which the BT supposedly borrowed? Here the BT is more likely the source of *Toledot Yeshu,* which elaborated on the talmudic kernel with great creativity. For more persuasive evidence of a somewhat earlier dating of the *Toledot Yeshu*, see Hillel Newman, "The Death of Jesus in the *Toledot Yeshu* Literature," *JTS* 50 (1999), 59–79.

95. The Greek text was edited by E. Schwartz, *Kyrillos von Skythopolis* (Leipzig, 1939), 137.

96. If the Christian versions are indeed the source of the rabbinic ones, then there is some irony in the rabbis' adapting a Christian didactic tale to portray Jesus in a negative light. I leave it to others to pursue the postcolonial theoretical angle or to apply James Scott's notion of the "hidden transcript" (although the fact that

the disciple is identified as Jesus only in the Bavli, and not in the Yerushalmi, complicates these possibilities).

97. On such different ethical visions, see Gilbert Meilander, *Friendship: A Study in Theological Ethics* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1981).

98. Gero, "Stern Master," 300. The significance of this difference, for Gero, relates to the dating and sequence of the versions. See the following note.

99. This dubious interpretation is crucial to Gero's claim that the Talmudic versions postdate, and derive from, the Christian ones. He postulates that the story originated in an oral, Syriac milieu (based on some sketchy linguistic evidence) and argues, as noted above, that the version in *The Epic Histories* is closest to that original version and that Cyril of Scythopolis provides a more optimistic ending. That the PT goes one step further and offers this defense of the master reflects an even later, derivative form. These criteria for dating strike me as wholly arbitrary, as the changes could be due to a variety of factors and not proximity to a hypothetical original source. The PT in fact was redacted about a century before *The Epic Histories* (Gero actually dates the PT story to the third century, on questionable grounds), so its version is actually the earliest according to the date of the text's completion. Moreover, Gero concedes that both the PT version and the later BT version contain some elements that are closer to the original source. In light of Gero's speculative assumptions and mixed evidence, I think the question of priority is open, and the Jewish versions may antedate the Christian ones. But the entire question is probably misguided, as it posits too static a notion of an "original" version, when multiple versions probably existed from early times.

100. R. Meir sends his disciple to test his wife Beruriah by trying to seduce her (bAZ 18b), but this is clearly not a test of his disciple.

101. See *TS*, 279–81. Here the PT criticizes Elisha (following the tradition found already in the *Mekhilta*) but not Judah b. Tabai, whereas the BT also criticizes Joshua b. Perahia. Moreover, while Elisha is certainly a rabbinized figure, he is not a named sage.

102. The story of R. Yohanan and Resh Laqish can be included among stories with lessons for the master, as it culminates in the tragic death of both, and the blame is evidently to be shared. Resh Laqish, to be sure, is guilty of disrespect to his master; but had R. Yohanan not insulted Resh Laqish in the first place, the tragedy could have been avoided (bBM 84a).

Chapter 8 *Stammaitic Astrology*

1. The situation is succinctly stated by Erich Bischoff in *Babylonisch-Astrales im Weltbilde des Thalmud und Midrasch* (Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1907), 115: "Astrologie und Astronomie sind ursprünlich eins."

2. Saul Lieberman, *Greek in Jewish Palestine* (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary, 1942), 98.

3. F. E. Robbins, Introduction to the Loeb edition of Ptolemy, *Tetrabiblos* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1940), xi–xii. Astrology was equally prominent in Sasanian culture. See David Pingree, "Astrology and Astronomy," *Encyclopaedia Iranica* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1987), 2:858–70; idem, "Classical and Byzantine Astrology in Sassanian Persia," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 43 (1989), 227–39; S. H. Taqizadeh, "Some Chronological Data Relating to the Sasanian Period," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental Studies* 9 (1937), 125–39.

4. The Bavli often uses such binary formulae to refer to legal views in an inexact way for heuristic and mnemonic purposes. Thus, the phrases "a sukkah is a permanent dwelling" and "a sukkah is a temporary dwelling" are used to conceptualize different Tannaitic views, not all of which agree in all respects; see Jeffrey L. Rubenstein, "The Sukkah as Temporary or Permanent Dwelling: A Study in the Development of Talmudic Thought," *HUCA* 64 (1993), 137–66.

5. See e.g. Joseph Trachtenberg, *Jewish Magic and Superstition: A Study of Folk Religion* (New York: Behrman, 1939), 250.

6. See n. 107.

7. I believe Louis Jacobs first called attention to theological *sugyot* in "The *Sugya* on Sufferings in B. *Berakhot* 5a, b," *Studies in Aggadah, Targum and Jewish Liturgy in Memory of Joseph Heinemann*, ed. J. J. Petuchowski and E. Fleischer (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1981), 32–44. And see Y. Elman, "Righteousness as Its Own Reward: An Inquiry into the Theology of the Stam," *PAAJR* 57 (1991), 35–67.

8. The entire *sugya* is analyzed by Kocku von Stuckrad, *Das Ringen um die Astrologie: Jüdische und christliche Beiträge zum antiken Zeitverständnis*, (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2000), 460–80. Stuckrad concentrates on the first part of the *sugya* and deals but cursorily with the three narratives, so our analyses complement one another nicely.

9. Literally, "Chaldeans," as is typical of Bavli usage. Throughout the ancient world, "Chaldean" was a synonym for "astrologer." See e.g. Vitruvius, *De Architectura* 9.4.2, trans. F. Granger (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1934), 245–46: "[A]s to astrology, the effects produced on the human course of life by the twelve signs, the five planets, the sun and moon, we must give way to the calculation of the Chaldaeans (*chaldaeorum;* Granger translates "Chaldaean astrologers"), because the casting of nativities is special to them so that they can explain the past and the future from astronomical calculations. Those who have sprung from the Chaldaean nation have handed on their discoveries about matters in which they have approved themselves of great skill and subtley." In Syriac too *kaldiutha* means astrology, and the verb *akhled* can be used for the practice of astrology. See too Dan 2:2.

10. The Aramaic *makhbanta* is obscure. It appears only here and in bShab 62a. Sokoloff, *DJBA*, 675, offers "perhaps a type of head covering or cloak" for bShab

62a and "perhaps a twisted pin" for our case. Jastrow, *Dictionary,* 781, translates, "brooch, buckle." I have translated "wedding crown" following Jacob Levy, *Woerterbuch ueber die Talmudim und Midraschim*, 4 vols. (Berlin: B. Harz, 1924), 3:110 ("ein Diadem, das schneckenartig um den kopf des Weibes gewunden wird") and the Geonim. See Rav Sherira Gaon cited in *OGT* to bShab 62a (p. 60) "wool clasped like a type of crown, which they place around women's heads," and Rav Nahshon Gaon, "a piece of jewelry similar to a crown, but wider than a crown, that they place around the whole head." See too Paul Haupt, "Tobit's Blindness and Sara's Hysteria," *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 60 (1921), 80–81, who translates "nuptial crown," on the basis of Syriac and Arabic cognates.

11. The exception is the story of R. Akiba's daughter, extensively studied by folklorists, though not so much by those interested in astrology.

12. bShab 129a, bAZ 30a. Ablat also appears in yShab 3:3, 6a = Bes 2:5, 61c.

13. See Maharsha ad loc. "He meant that it is possible that the man would come back on account of his merit, for Shmuel did not yet know that he had acquired merit, for he subsequently said to him, 'What did you do?'"

14. The reading in ms M, "Shmuel stated, 'He will go and return,'" mitigates this difficulty, as we could explain that Shmuel knew the man to be righteous.

15. See *TS,* 250–51, for the use of flashbacks in Bavli narratives.

16. Two different Aramaic roots are used: the snake is "thrown (*shdi*) and cut," while the man offers to throw (*armina*). Note that Ablat "throws (*shadi*)" the man's pack, another use of the root.

17. Rashi, ad loc., s.v., *betartei*. In the late parallel in *Pesiqta Zutarti* (= *Leqah Tov*), *Devarim* (1880; reprint, Jerusalem: H. Wegshel, 1986), 31a, the reading is "to the marsh to cut reeds," which helps close the gap.

18. The term *agma* refers to a marsh, meadow, or uncultivated field. See Sokoloff, *DJBA*, 79; Levy, *Woerterbuch*, 1:21; Jastrow, *Dictionary*, 12–13: "An unclear field that requires clearing."

19. Rashi seems to draw on passages that associate marshes with cutting down reeds, e.g., bShab 95a, "one who used to cut down reeds in the marshes." So too bSanh 33a, bSanh 82b, bBekh 8b. However, marshes appear in other Bavli passages with no connection to cutting reeds.

20. See below, "Sources and Composition."

21. So Stuckrad, *Ringen*, 477–80; Jacob Neusner, *A History of the Jews in Babylonia*, 3rd ed. (Leiden: Brill, 1965–70; reprint, Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1984), 4:191–92.

22. But see below, n. 50 and text thereto.

23. I have not found horoscopes this specific (to die by a snakebite on a certain day) in the astrological handbooks I checked (see n. 83), although there are plenty of predictions of specific deaths, including snakebites. See e.g. Ptolemy, *Tetrabib-*

los, 4.9 (p. 136); Firmicus, *Matheseos*, 8.17.7 (p. 281), 8.26.3 (p. 291). Tamsyn Barton notes "Death by snake-bite is an important category because of the prominence of serpent-like constellations"; *Ancient Astrology* (London: Routledge, 1994), 168. Somewhat rarer are predictions of death at specific times, though a few are attested, such as a child "will be born to him who will live a short while and die in the third year" (Dorotheus, *Carmen Astrologicum*, III.2.40 [p. 244]). But of course, on a popular level such specific forecasts may have been common. The specificity may also be due to the folkloristic nature of the source (though this cannot be the case for Ablat's similar forecast).

24. For later parallels, see Schwarzbaum, *Studies in Jewish and World Folklore*, 280; Gaster, *Exempla*, #100, p. 204; Ginzberg, *Legends of the Jews*, 6:335–36; Heda Jason, *Types of Oral Tales in Israel,* Part 2 (Jerusalem: Israel Ethnographic Society, 1975), 58–59.

25. Galit Hasan-Rokem, "The Snake at the Wedding—A Semiotic Reconsideration of the Comparative Method of Folk Narrative Research," *ARV: Scandinavian Yearbook of Folklore* 43 (1987), 78, n. 21, 85 n. 42; Haim Schwarzbaum, "The Hero Predestined to Die on his Wedding Day (AT 934B)," *Folklore Research Center Studies* 4 (1974), 223–35; Schwarzbaum, *Studies in Jewish and World Folklore*, 278–93. See A. Aarne, *The Types of the Folk-Tale*, trans. S. Thompson, 2nd revision (Helsinki: Academia Scientiarum Fennica, 1964), 174, 329; Thompson, *Motif Index of Folk Literature*, 5:361. Hasan-Rokem (83) proposes the following structure for type 934 B: "I. Bride or bridegroom will die on wedding night. II. A moral deed, usually almsgiving, is performed. III. A confrontation with death occurs. IV. Hero(ine) is rescued."

26. See Haupt, "Tobit's Blindness," 71–95; Schwarzbaum, "The Hero Predestined," 234–38.

27. Tobit several times instructs that "Charity delivers from death" (4:10, 12:9; and see 14:10) apparently quoting Prov 10:2 and 11:4, as does our story, although Tobias is saved from the demon by burning the fish entrails, not through giving alms (8:1–4).

28. Schwarzbaum, "The Hero Predestined," 223–35. The hero dies in AT 934 and 934A but survives in 934B. Schwarzbaum discusses the story of R. Akiba's daughter on pp. 236–37, associating it with other folk motifs.

29. Fraenkel, *Iyyunim*, 14–16.

30. Ibid., 16: "The power of the stars is only a consequence of a man's sins, and it does not prevail over him."

31. See n. 10.

32. That snakes are found in wall cracks, despite the folkloristic aspects noted above, derives from Amos 5:19, "As if a man should run away from a lion and be attacked by a bear; or if he got indoors, should lean his hand on the wall and be

bitten by a snake," and Qoh 10:8. "He who breaches a stone fence will be bitten by a snake."

33. bBB 10a–b. See too bRH 16b. Although according to Ahuva Ho, *Sedeq and Sedaqah in the Hebrew Bible* (New York: Peter Lang, 1991), 143–44, *tsedaqa* never means "charity" in the Bible. Also see there p. 71 on these verses.

34. See Saul Lieberman, "Two Lexicographical Notes," *JBL* 65 (1946) 69–72; Jastrow, *Dictionary*, 824.

35. Shmuel too makes no effort to warn the man of the astrologer's prediction. However, since he rejects its validity, he has less reason to disclose it to the subject.

36. Likewise the Bavli claims that "dreams follow the mouth," i.e., the interpretation. The articulation of unfortunate interpretations of Rava's dreams causes him an unmitigated series of tragedies, bBer 56a–b.

37. Perhaps, too, Rav Nahman's mother does not want it to turn into a self-fulfilling prophecy. She fears that if her son knows the reason why she exhorts him to cover his head, he will ignore her "superstitious" worry.

38. See too Yuval Harari, "The Sages and the Occult," *The Literature of the Sages*, Section 2, 3b, *Second Part: Midrash and Targum*, ed. S. Safrai et al. (Amsterdam: Royal Van Gorcum, 2006), 562 n. 182, which notes that behind this story "lies the notion that the astral fate is the suppressed default position that also accompanies 'Israel' and bursts forth at the moment when it relinquishes its 'fear of heaven.'"

39. At least this seems to be the type of astrology assumed here. Ablat predicts what will happen to the man in the current endeavor, and there is no reference to his birth. For examples of astrology of this type, see Dorotheus, *Carmen Astrologicum,* Book 5. (See below, n. 83.)

40. See p. 166.

41. It is theoretically possible that the redactors transmitted an earlier, Amoraic collection of stories, the compiler of which had created this unit out of disparate traditions; but we know of no collections of this sort in Babylonia, and the reworking of sources to be described below points to the Stammaim.

42. See Yassif, *Folktale*, 209–44, especially 232–37, on tales grouped by theme.

43. See *CBT*, 102–22, with additional literature on the stories cited on p. 193 n. 9.

44. Paul Mandel, "Tales of the Destruction of the Temple: Between the Land of Israel and Babylonia," *Merkaz utefutsah*, ed. I. Gafni (Jerusalem: Shazar Institute, 2004), 155–58. (And see p. 156 for additional phrases shared by the second and third stories.) See too Yassif, *Folktale*, 242. These stories clearly form a unit, as they are introduced with a summary: "Jerusalem was destroyed because of Qamtsa and Bar Qamtsa. Tur Malka was destroyed because of a cock and a hen. Betar was destroyed because of the shaft of a litter." However, the first story was later elaborated upon and other stories added between the first and second story, somewhat obscuring

the structure, unlike our case here in bShab 156b. On this point see Rubenstein, *TS*, 144–47; Mandel, ibid.

45. I briefly discuss some differences between the stories in *CBT*, 68–69.

46. See e.g. Yassif, *Folktale*, 163.

47. See n. 13.

48. See paragraph above: that the man "throws" the bread in the basket, echoing the snake cut and thrown into two parts, strains the typical uses of the verb; and there is no direct relationship between the two acts of throwing, as there is with the cuttings of the bread/snake.

49. Incidentally, this revision also helps account for the more awkward fit of the concluding midrash, noted above, in the first story, where it must be understood as generic "righteousness," compared to that in the second story, where it refers to charity. And see the paragraph below on the original context of this midrash.

50. See Rabbinovicz, *DQS*, ad loc. n. *yod*. (The first printing of the *Eyn Yaakov* preserves this reading only in the second story.)

51. Ephraim Urbach, *The Sages: Their Concepts and Beliefs,* trans. I. Abrahams (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1979), 264–65, 804 n. 35. Similarly, Rabbinovicz implies that this was the original reading.

52. Cited according to ms Florence II-I-9.

53. "Unusual death" appears in bTa 11a, bSot 35a, bBB 10a; *SifDeut* #218 (251). "Punishment of Hell" appears in bBer 61a, bShab 118a, bEruv 18b, bYev 102b, etc.

54. bEruv 56a, bShab 129a. See Solomon Gandz, "The Origins of the Planetary Week, or The Planetary Week in Hebrew Literature," *PAAJR* 19 (1948–49), 226–27.

55. Ms M reads "winter."

56. As is well known, the phrase "But it was not the case" (*velo hi*) introduces post-Amoraic material. See Chapter 5, n. 31. Interestingly, in the Amoraic tradition, Shmuel explains to Ablat why he sleeps in the sun, thus sharing medical knowledge with him. The post-Amoraic gloss attributes a different reason to Shmuel's behavior and has him refuse to share that information with Ablat.

57. Because the planets were also thought to influence bodily health and physiology (and therefore ancient astrological tracts have sections on these topics), medicinal knowledge such as demonstrated by Shmuel is essentially a type of astrology.

58. The formulation "R. Akiba went out and expounded" appears in several other passages; see bNed 40a, bAZ 10b. Both of these are Hebrew, as opposed to the Aramaic version of the story.

59. For "The astrologers said to him" see bBer 64a, bYev 21b, bSanh 95a, bShab 119a. For "a snake will bite him (or bit him) and he will die (or died)" found in Hebrew or Aramaic, see tSanh 8:3, bShab 110a; *LevR* 20:3 (452).

60. Ari Elon, "The Symbolism of the Components of the Plot in the Talmudic

Story" (M.A. thesis: Hebrew University, 1982), 82–103 (Hebrew); see bQid 81a, bKet 67b, bBM 59b, bMQ 27a, bTa 23b.

61. Interestingly, Urbach (*Sages*, 804 n. 35) recognized the striking affinities between the stories but came to the opposite conclusion: "So far as the theme itself is concerned, it seems to me that the story about R. Akiba's daughter is not authentic, and is merely a parallel narrative to that about Samuel." However, Urbach was concerned that R. Akiba's teaching here is inconsistent with traditions attributed to him elsewhere, an illegitimate consideration according to contemporary theory. In light of the PT parallel to the first story, the story of R. Akiba's daughter should be considered the original. Still, it is significant that Urbach noted that the two stories did not arrive independently.

62. See Chapter 2, under "Building Blocks, Sources, and Motifs," (9).

63. *Haruta*. On the meaning of this term see Shlomo Naeh, "Freedom and Celibacy : A Talmudic Variation on Tales of Temptation and Fall in Genesis and Its Syrian Background," *The Book of Genesis in Jewish and Oriental Christian Interpretation*, ed. J. Frishman and L. van Rompay (Louvain: Peeters, 1997), 73–89.

64. For analysis of this story see ibid.; Yonah Fraenkel, "Remarkable Phenomena in the Text-History of the Aggadic Stories," *Proceedings of the Seventh World Congress of Jewish Studies* (Jerusalem: World Congress of Jewish Studies, 1981) 3:67–69; Hananel Mack, "Al gevarim shehitpatu akh hata'am lo alah beyadam," in *Higayon L'Yona: New Aspects in the Study of Midrash, Aggadah and Piyyut, in Honor of Yonah Fraenkel,* ed. J. Levinson et al. (Jerusalem: Magnes, 2006), 433–43; Ishai Rosen-Zvi, "Yetser hara, miniut ve'isurei yihud: Perek be'antropologia talmudit," *Teoria ubiqoret* 14 (1999), 55–84.

65. See too bBB 5a, where Ravina instructs his worker to "take a cluster of unripe dates" from a man named Ronya, i.e., to steal it, in order to prove a point about the guarding of the field.

66. See bQid 31a, 33a; bShab 118b.

67. To "rule" (*malakh*) is a technical term for the head of the academy; see Chapter 5, n. 23. And see the variants in the appendix, where we also find "I became Head of the Academy."

68. That is, one born on Sunday either does not have "one good thing," and is therefore completely evil, like Dimi b. Kakozita, or does not have "one bad thing" and is consequently completely good, like Rav Ashi. "Kakozita" may be a symbolic name (*kakos* = evil).

69. See Lieberman, *TK*, 8:985–86 (to tQid line 5:17) for the etymology of this term.

70. On notebooks used by sages, see B. Gerhardsson, *Memory and Manuscript: Oral Tradition and Written Transmission in Rabbinic Judaism and Early Christianity*,

trans. E. J. Sharpe (Lund: Gleerup, 1961), 160–63; S. Lieberman, *Hellenism in Jewish Palestine* (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary, 1950), 203–8.

71. Below I will argue that the Stammaim formulated the debate as presented here, so I have set it in the smaller font. The content derives from the Amoraim but the formulation is Stammaitic.

72. For this reason, incidentally, I believe that the protagonist of the final story is Rav Nahman bar Yitshaq rather than another sage. Why certain sages are chosen as protagonists for such fictional stories is not always clear. Mack, "Al gevarim shehitpatu," 433–43, appropriately poses this question in his discussion of a story about R. Hanina at bQid 81a, though he fails to find a compelling answer. In some cases the name is thematically related to the story; see *TS*, 246–47.

73. However, see below in text on the efforts to correlate astrology with Scripture.

74. See Lieberman, *Hellenism*, 208. However, this is not the case of the two previous traditions in the preceding Talmudic passage, also found in notebooks.

75. Actually the source of authority of sage-stories is difficult to define. See Joshua Levinson, "The Cultural Dignity of Narrative," *Creation and Composition*, 381–82.

76. See Dina Stein, "Devarim shero'im misham lo ro'im mikan: iyyun bevava batra 73a–75b," *Jerusalem Studies in Hebrew Literature* 17 (1999), 9–32, for a brilliant reading of a conflict between genres in that passage.

77. See James Charlesworth, "Jewish Interest in Astrology during the Hellenistic and Roman Periods," in *Aufstieg und Niedergang Römischen Welt*, II.20/2, ed. W. Haase et al. (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1987), 933–50; M. Albani, "Horoscopes," *Encyclopaedia of the Dead Sea Scrolls*, ed. L. H. Schiffman and J. C. VanderKam (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 1:370–73; Stuckrad, *Ringen*, 160–308; Harari, "The Sages and the Occult," 558–63; Joel C. Dobin, *To Rule Both Day and Night: Astrology in the Bible, Midrash and Talmud* (New York: Inner Traditions International, 1977).

78. Of course the meaning of zodiacs on synagogue floors is debated, though those who insist that the iconography was "merely" decorative strike me as apologetic. See Günter Stemberger, "Die Bedeutung des Tierkreises," *Kairos* 17 (1975), 23–56 (with further references); Lee Levine, *The Ancient Synagogue* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 572–79; Gideon Foerster, "The Zodiac in Ancient Synagogues and Its Place in Jewish Thought and Literature," *Eretz Israel* 19 (1987), 225–34 (Hebrew); Charlesworth, "Jewish Interest in Astrology," 940–47.

79. Some might consider these traditions as "proto-astrology," as they do not involve the signs of the zodiac. See David Pingree, *From Astral Omens to Astrology, from Babylon to Bikaner* (Rome: Insituto per l'Africa e l'Oriente, 1997), 23–25; Charlesworth, "Jewish Interest in Astrology," 931. And see A. Sachs's distinction between horoscopy and nonhoroscopic astrology in "Babylonian Horoscopes," *Journal of Cuneiform Studies* 6 (1952), 50. Other rabbinic texts of course refer to signs of the

Zodiac, as do the Dead Sea Scrolls. See too various notes below on the discussions of individual planets in other astrological texts.

80. See Gandz, "The Origins of the Planetary Week, 215–16.

81. Ibid., 218–20. For other possible interpretations of R. Hanina's statement, see Stuckrad, *Ringen*, 473–74.

82. However, the connection between the specific planets and their effects varies: some of the planetary influences, such as that of Mars (the "red planet," hence associated with blood and violence), are typical of the astrological literature of the time. Others seem idiosyncratic. For detailed discussion see M. S. Karppe, "Quelques mots d'astrologie talmudique," *Journal Asiatique* 9/5 (1895), 316–39; Stuckrad, *Ringen*, 467–70; J. C. Greenfield and M. Sokoloff, "Astrological and Related Omen Texts in Jewish Palestinian Aramaic," *JNES* 48 (1989), 210–14.

83. The astrological texts that I have checked for parallels are Firmicus Maternus, *Matheseos;* Dorotheus of Sidon, *Carmen Astrologicum*; Ptolemy, *Tetrabiblos*; Vetruvius Valens, *Anthologies*, Book I; *Syriac Book of Medicines*; and the collection *Greek Horoscopes*. The following editions were used: Firmicus Maternus, *Matheseos Libri VIII*, in *Ancient Astrology: Theory and Practice*, trans. Jean Rhys Bram (Park Ridge, NJ: Noyes Press, 1975); *Ptolemy's Tetrabiblos*, trans. J. M. Ashmand (North Hollywood, CA: Symbols & Signs, 1976); *Dorothei Sidonii. Carmen Astrologicum,* trans. D. Pingree (Leipzig: Teubner, 1976); *Syriac Book of Medicines (Syrian Anatomy, Pathology and Therapeutics, or "The Book of Medicines")*, trans. E. A. W. Budge (London: Oxford University Press, 1913); *Vettius Valens D'Antioche: Antholgies, Livre I*, trans. J.-F. Bara (Leiden: Brill, 1989); O. Neugebauer and H. B. Van Hoesen, *Greek Horoscopes* (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society 1959). Dorotheus and Valens were translated into Pahlavi in the Sasanian period, and Ptolemy's work was known too. See Pingree, "Classical and Byzantine Astrology," 227–39. For secrets, see Firmicus, *Matheseos*, 4:2:16 (p. 165), 5:4:19 (p. 177); Dorotheus, *Carmen Astrologicum*, II.14.2 (p. 212), IV.1.09 (p. 259). For frustration of plans against him, see *Syriac Book of Medicines*, 1:515/2:617; Dorotheus, IV.1.11 (p. 246). For unsuccessful thievery, see Firmicus, *Matheseos*, 8.19.2 (p. 282). For the prediction that he will be a busy man, see *Ptolemy's Tetrabiblos*, 18 (p. 113).

84. On Firmicus see the "Index of Occupations," pp. 316–22, of Firmicus, *Matheseos*. For an example from *Ptolemy's Tetrabiblos*, see n. 88.

85. No claim to being written is made of R. Hanina's tradition, and we find a mnemonic *siman* in one manuscript before R. Hanina's rendition of the planets and their effects; see the appendix.

86. See n. 83.

87. Firmicus Maternus offers about thirty paragraphs on the influence of each of the planets (although Mercury has 115!). However, each of these paragraphs contains up to six permutations, resulting in a great proliferation of horoscopes.

88. 1:515 (Syriac) = 2:617 (English). And see 1:488/2:574. For discussion of this book and bibliography, see Adam H. Becker, "Doctoring the Past in the Present: E. A. Wallis Budge, the Discourse on Magic, and the Colonization of Iraq," *History of Religions* 44 (2005), 175–215. The Talmudic traditions also have some affinities with the "Babylonian Horoscopes" found on cuneiform tablets and published by A. Sachs in *Journal of Cuneiform Studies* 6 (1952), 49–75. Even Firmicus (see the previous note) has a brief section on the general attributes of the planets, 4.19 (pp. 138–44). See too *Ptolemy's Tetrabiblos*, 3:18 (p. 111). "When Jupiter alone has dominion of the mind, and is gloriously situated, he renders it generous, gracious, pious, reverent, joyous, courteous, lofty, liberal, just, magnanimous, noble, self-acting, compassionate, fond of learning, beneficient, benevolent, and calculated for government; and if posited ingloriously, he will endow the mind with qualities apparently similar to these, but not of such virtue and lustre. . . ." He then continues to discuss the effects of Jupiter in conjunction with other planets.

89. For other parallels in Syriac and Mandaic sources, see Greenfield and Sokoloff, "Astrological and Related Omen Texts," 211–14.

90. See ibid., 211.

91. See Friedman, "Pereq ha'isha rabba," 301–8; Rubenstein, "Criteria of Stammaitic Intervention in Aggada," 417–40.

92. Rav Ashi originally made one comment on section 1A, namely the lengthier statement. The redactors first quote an abbreviated version of that statement to enhance the dialectical quality.

93. See *CBT*, 54–66.

94. I am treating the comments of Rav Ashi in 1A as one statement; see n. 92.

95. There may even be a distant echo of the standard argument against nativities, recycled in almost every antiastrological polemic and preemptively addressed in some astrological tracts, that astrology must be false because sometimes two people born at the same moment, or sharing the same horoscope, experience different fates. How can a great sage and a bandit chief share the same horoscope? (1A). See Neusner, *History*, 4:191. The argument was made famous by Augustine in *Confessions* 7.6.8. For discussion of this argument among Christians, see Tim Hegedus, *Early Christianity and Ancient Astrology* (New York: Peter Lang, 2007), 43–89, who calls it "the argument of different destinies."

96. See Chapter 3, p. 55 for discussion of this idea.

97. Cf. Firmicus, *Matheseos*, 4:10.3 (p. 125): "But Mars in dejected houses will make soldiers or athletes who make a living for themselves by fire or sword; or he will make physicians or surgeons." Here is a similar list of those who shed blood, but of course no circumcisor.

98. A similar characterization could be found among Christian astrologers.

99. Perhaps the glosses are also motivated by the names of the days of the

week, "the first/second/third of the Sabbath," which evoke the creation account. R. Hanina, on the other hand, does not mention the days of the week.

100. See e.g. Rashi and Maharsha on the relationship between flora and fornication for the horoscope for Tuesday (section 1C).

101. An interesting example of the confusion that can result from this tension surfaces in the analysis of Ludwig Wächter, "Astrologie und Schicksalsglaube im rabbinischen Judentum," *Kairos* 11 (1969), 195–96. Wächter rejects R. Hanina's clarification of R. Yehoshua's opinion that it is the *planet* of the day that determines fate, rather than the day itself, because of the links to the creation account. He therefore denies that it is an astrological scheme: "Seine Theorie kann ich . . . nicht als astrologisch ansehen; denn die Begründunden weder nicht von Gestirnkonstellation, sondern vom Schöpfungsbericht der Genesis her genommen . . .Chanina bar Chamam jedoch . . . fasste diese astrologisch auf . . . und stellte ihr seine eigene astrologische Theorie entgegen." But of course the problem disappears if we recognize that the links to Genesis are later glosses of the Stammaim.

102. See Erich S. Gruen, *Diaspora: Jews amidst Greeks and Romans* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002), 213–25; Emil Schürer, *The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ*, trans. T. A. Burkill et al., ed. Geza Vermes, Fergus Miller, and Martin Goodman (1901–9; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1971–87), 3:580–88; Stuckrad, *Ringen*, 308–10.

103. See Gruen, *Diaspora*, 221–27: "Jewish writers opted less for antagonism [to Hellenism—J.R.] or admiration than for appropriation (p. 221)."

104. For all the sources, see Martin Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism*, trans. J. Bowden (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1974), 2:62 n. 264; Geza Vermes, *Scripture and Tradition in Judaism* (Leiden: Brill, 1983), 81 (from Eusebius, *Praepoiratio Evangelica*, 17, 3–4): "Eupolemos says that Abraham . . . invented astrology and the Chaldean science . . . Artapanus writes that Abraham went together with his whole family, to Pharethon, king of the Egyptians, and taught him astrology." See too Annette Yoshiko Reed, "Abraham as Chaldean Scientist and Father of the Jews: Josephus, *Ant.* 1.154–168, and the Greco-Roman Discourse about Astronomy/Astrology," *JSJ* 35 (2004), 119–58. And see the discussion of Artapanus in Gruen, *Diaspora,* 202, 224–25; Charlesworth, "Jewish Interest in Astrology," 934–35 (on Enoch inventing astrology); Stuckrad, *Ringen*, 306–8.

105. The verse may indeed be directed against proto-astrology or celestial omens. See Jack R. Lundbom, *Jeremiah 1–20* (Anchor Bible 21A; New York: Doubleday, 1999), 583–84.

106. Thus, the prohibitions against astrology and omens in the Tannaitic midrashim (see the following note) are linked to the prohibition against Israelites' engaging in divination and sorcery in Deut 18:14. This is not because divination and omens are groundless, but because they impugn divine sovereignty and therefore

should be left to the gentiles: "Those gentiles that you are about to possess do indeed resort to soothsayers and augurs."

107. Cf. the parallel to this tradition, presumably its source, in *Mekhilta*, *Pisha* 1:1 (7), attributed to R. Yonatan (confusion between Yonatan and Yohanan is routine in manuscripts). "R. Yoshia said: 'When the planets (*mazalot*) are eclipsed in the East, it is a bad omen for residents of the East; in the West, it is a bad omen for residents in the West.' R. Yonatan said: 'Both these and those [omens] were given to the gentiles, as it says, *Thus said the Lord: Do not learn to go the way of the gentiles, And do not be dismayed by portents in the sky; [let the gentiles be dismayed by them] (Jer 10:2)*.'" Here R. Yonatan/Yohanan disputes with R. Yoshia, who deals not with astrology proper but with celestial omens, that is, the belief that God (or the gods) reveals warnings and information about future events through unusual celestial phenomena. At issue is not the status of an individual's horoscope and the determination of his fate on that basis (genethlialogy). And note that he does not use the expression "Israel has no *mazal*." The Stammaim seem to have drawn on this tradition and applied it to the issue of astrology, attributing to R. Yohanan himself the general formula "Israel has no *mazal,*" which they employ throughout the *sugya*. A different version of the tradition appears in *Midrash Tannaim* 18:14 (110–11): "R. Yonatan said . . . Another interpretation: *[Those gentiles that you are about to dispose do indeed resort to soothsayers and augurs;] to you, however, the Lord your God has not assigned the like (Deut 18:14)* — for there is no *mazal* for Israel (*she'ain lahen leyisra'el mazal*)." Here we have the attribution to R. Yonatan, and the midrash that explicitly states "Israel has no *mazal*" (in slightly different form) is based on Deut 18:14. But the provenance of *Midrash Tannaim*, which David Hoffman reconstructed on the basis of *Midrash Hagadol*, is questionable. This tradition indeed appears verbatim in *Midrash Hagadol* to Deut 18:14 (ed. S. Fish; Jerusalem: Rav Kook, 424), therefore this instantiation cannot be accepted as authentically Tannaitic, especially in light of its absence from the *Mekhilta*. See too *GenR* 44:12 (433) and bSuk 29a.

108. See Joseph Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 40–55* (Anchor Bible 19A; New York: Doubleday, 2000), 197. Cf. Ho, *Sedeq*, 96–97.

109. The version in bNed 32a reads: "Rav Yehuda said Rav said: When the Holy One, blessed be He, said to Abraham our Father, *Walk in my ways and be blameless (Gen 17:1)*, fear seized him [Abraham]. He said, 'Perhaps He has seen something blameworthy in me.' When He [God] said to him, *I will establish my covenant between Me and you (Gen 17:2)*, he [Abraham] calmed down. *He [God] took him* (hotsei) *[Abraham] outside [and said: Look toward the heaven and count the stars, if you are able to count them] (Gen 15:5)*. Abraham said before him, 'Master of the Universe! I have seen my *mazal* and I am not fit to have a son?' He [God] said to him, 'Go out (*tsei*) from your astrology (*itstagninut*), Israel has no *mazal*.'" Here our exegetical narrative follows another tradition about Abraham also attributed to Rav Yehuda in the name

of Rav. It has been abbreviated, lacking some of the dialogue between Abraham and God. Most important, God's response that Abraham should desist from astrology based on the exegesis of Isa 41:2 has been replaced by the general formula "Israel has no *mazal*." But in this case the formula has no exegetical support and is simply "read in," thus destroying the "exegetical" aspect of the exegetical narrative. The loss of exegetical anchors in later versions of exegetical narratives is well-documented, as discussed in the previous chapter; see Levinson, *The Twice-Told Tale*, 239–307. The tradition in bNed 32a seems to have been adapted from our *sugya*, and the formula "Israel has no *mazal*," attributed to God himself in an attempt to abbreviate the source. This is the only other instantiation of the formula in the Bavli.

110. Cf. Stuckrad, *Ringen*, 479–80; Dobin, *To Rule Both Day and Night*, 196–98.

111. See Jay Rovner, "Rhetorical Strategy and Dialectical Necessity in the Babylonian Talmud: The Case of Kiddushin 34a–35a," *HUCA* 65 (1994), 177–231; idem, "Pseudepigraphic Invention and Diachronic Stratification in the Stammaitic Component of the Bavli: The Case of Sukka 28," *HUCA* 68 (1997), 11–62.

112. See too the variants in the Geonic paraphrase cited in *OGT, Shabbat*, #477, p. 161.

Chapter 9 *Theodicy and Torah*

1. I have drawn a great deal from these two studies: Yonah Fraenkel, "Hermeneutic Problems," and Nachman Levine, "Reading Crowned Letters and Semiotic Silences in Menachot 29b," JJS 53 (2002), 35–48. See too Laurence I. Edwards, "Rabbi Akiba's Crowns: Postmodern Discourse and the Cost of Rabbinic Reading," *Judaism* 49 (2000), 417–34; Michael Rosenberg, "Otiot ukhetarim," in *By the Well: Studies in Jewish Philosophy and Halakhic Thought, Presented to Gerald J. Blidstein*, ed. U. Ehrlich et al. (Beer-Sheva: Ben Gurion University Press, 2008), 529–64. Briefer treatments include Hayes, "*Halakhah le-Moshe mi-Sinai*," 99–100; and Boyarin, "Border Lines," 165–66.

2. See mss variants in the appendix.

3. On the contextualization, see Edwards, "Rabbi Akiba's Crowns," 424–25; Rosenberg, "Otiot ukhetarim," 545.

4. Of course one can find meaning in the connection between the story and the proximate laws, e.g., that the laws of writing Torah scrolls are of critical importance, as even God himself meticulously attends to the details of writing each letter. Or again, that the scribe making every stroke of each letter of Torah works *imitatio dei*. But I do not think such considerations motivated the juxtaposition of the story here.

5. See e.g. James Kugel, "Two Introductions to Midrash," *Prooftexts 3* (1983), 138–43.

6. The only exception, to the best of my knowledge, is Elijah, who meets up with sages in a number of stories, typically answering questions or revealing "what the Holy One, blessed be he, was doing at that time" (see e.g. bBM 59b, bHag 15b). However, Elijah's appearance is primarily a function of his quasi-immortality, that he never really died according to the biblical account (2 Kgs 2:11) and therefore functions in rabbinic stories as a type of angel. A few traditions about the "Men of the Great Assembly" place the later biblical figures (Mordechai, Ezra) in a body with the earliest rabbis (R. Shimon the Righteous).

7. Fraenkel, in "Hermeneutic Problems," 164–65, characterizes the story as "imaginative" or "surreal" (*hazoni*).

8. See Levine, "Reading Crowned Letters," 37–38.

9. At the **tim**e **when** Mo**se**s ascended on high, he found the Ho**ly** One, Blessed be He, **sit**ting and **ty**ing . . . .

10. He went and **sa**t at the end of **eig**hteen **row**s . . . his **str**en**gth** failed him.

11. **End** of some generations and Akiba ben Yo**sef**.

12. However, the Bavli often provides patronyms in documents and contexts in which an individual must be identified. Here God must identify that future sage to Moses, so the full name is not out of place.

13. His str**ength** failed him / his **mind** was settled.

14. Wei**ghing** his flesh in the meat-**market.**

15. Fraenkel, "Hermeneutic Problems," 165–71; Levine, "Reading Crowned Letters," 36–40.

16. See Fraenkel, "Hermeneutic Problems," 170.

17. Cf. Edwards, "Rabbi Akiba's Crowns," 517–19. One could also see the problem in terms of the gap between the Written Torah of Moses and the Oral Torah represented by the teachings of R. Akiba, namely that some aspects of the Oral Torah seem to be unrelated to Scripture such that the bearer of the Written Torah would not recognize them. See e.g. mHag 1:8 and Ofra Meir, *The Darshanic Story in Genesis Rabba* (Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuhad, 1987), 30–31 (Hebrew). However, the figure of crowns being prepared so that R. Akiba can make "heaps of heaps" of interpretations to me suggests the issue of the growth and expansion of Torah more than the relationship between the written and oral law.

18. See *CBT*, 16–38; *TS*, 270–72, and below, section 6, "Sources and Composition."

19. This is how the story is traditionally understood, but see below, the discussion of Mar Uqba's tradition in section 6, "Sources and Composition," for a different possibility.

20. So we are *not* dealing with a case like that of a tree that has the potential to grow out of an acorn, where we might say that the tree, though not present in the original creation of the acorn, somehow inheres in it. Nor are we dealing with a

case like geometry, where a limited set of axioms give rise to all sorts of complex theorems. Here we might fairly say that the theorems inhere in those axioms and potentially can be derived from the axioms by later thinkers who generate proof after proof and so expand the corpus of geometrical knowledge. In our case, by contrast, God essentially acknowledges that he adds the crowns *because* Akiba will expound heaps of new laws.

21. See e.g. the prayer, *Adon Olam*, "He is, and He was, and He will be in glory"; and the Additional Prayer (*musaf amida*) for Rosh HaShana: "Everything is revealed before you, Lord our God. You perceive and foresee the generations to the end of time."

22. Fraenkel, "Hermeneutic Problems," 167.

23. The story draws on the account found in bBer 61b; see section 6 below.

24. Of course, one can harmonize the story with standard rabbinic theology by arguing that the story deals with this world alone, and assumes that true rewards and punishments materialize in the world to come. See e.g. Urbach, *Sages*, 270. But rereading the story according to the different theology found in other sources destroys its essence. And see below, section 6.

25. See *GenR* 1:4 (6); *LevR* 29:1 (669); bBer 61a; *ARNB* 37 (48a).

26. Here I part company with Boyarin, *Border Lines*, 166: "To my mind, there is hardly a more powerful rendition of an apophatic hermeneutic, an apophatic divine will, and an apophatic theodicy, all in this one highly compressed narrative, or virtual myth, in which God will not or perhaps even, as it were, cannot explain the modalities of interpretation of his word or his activities in the universe." ("Apophatic theology" is the belief that God cannot be known except through negative statements of what He is not.) See too Boyarin's reading of the story in "Hellenism in Jewish Babylonia," *The Cambridge Companion to the Talmud and Rabbinic Literature*, ed. C. E. Fonrobert and M. S. Jaffee (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 336–63. The crowns of the letters, however, are "apophatic" only to Moses, not to Akiba and his students. And the image of God writing the Torah before Moses and explaining His actions seems to me anything but apophatic. I agree, however, that the second half of the story presents an "apophatic theodicy"—this contrast gives the story its power. Elizabeth Shanks Alexander offers a reading opposite to that of Boyarin, "The Orality of Rabbinic Writing," also in the *Cambridge Companion* (43–44.)

27. Fisch, *Rational Rabbis*, 192–95.

28. Moreover in the next chapter, Exod 34:4–7, God reveals his attributes to Moses, so rabbinic midrashim may have conflated the encounters in Exod 33 and Exod 34.

29. One could also interpret R. Meir's position to mean that God gave Moses no answer to the question of why the righteous suffer but only answered why some

wicked prosper. See the commentary *Ets Yosef* in *Eyn Yaakov* ad loc.: "According to R. Meir, the Holy One, blessed be He, made no answer whatsoever to Moses's question, 'why do some righteous suffer.'" In this case also the similarity to the story is evident.

30. Thus, the phrase, "to question my methods" (*hirher ahar midotai*), means to question God's justice. See e.g. Bava Batra 15b–16a; bNed 32a.

31. See e.g. the exegesis of Exod 33:20 in *SifNum*, #103 (102) and of Exod 33:18 in *DeutR, Va'ethanan*, p. 46. For another late source, see *ExodR* 45:5: "Another explanation, *Oh, let me behold your presence (Exod 33:18)*: He wished to understand the reward for the righteous and the prosperity of the wicked." And see the interpretation of Exod 33:19 and 33:23 in *ExodR* 45:6.

32. The story, like many later stories, is attributed to Rav Yehuda in the name of Rav. This attribution was probably borrowed from other such stories, although it is possible that an old tradition attributed to Rav Yehuda/Rav was reworked throughout the generations.

33. Parallels at *PR* 14 (64a–b), *NumR* 19:6 (79a–b), *TanB*, *Hukkat* 24 (59a–b).

34. The exegetical irritant is that one would expect Exod 18:4 to have said, "The second was named Eliezer," as Exod 18:3 states "the name of the first was Gershom." See Mandelbaum's note, ad loc.

35. Cf. Buber's n. 247 to *TanB*, *Hukkat* 24 (59a).

36. The connection in *ARNB* includes the famous tradition comparing Akiba's relentless learning of tradition to the slow chiseling away of a mountain of rock, based on Job 28:9, "Man sets his hand against the flinty rock, and overturns mountains by the roots." This passage in *ARNB* continues with a related tradition based on Job 28:11, "R. Eliezer said to him, 'Akiba. About you it is said, *So that hidden things may be brought to light*. R. Akiba brought to light things that were hidden and obscured (*me'ulamim umesutarim*) from your creatures.'" Here we deal with intellectual ability or genius, not the recepient of revelation, but there underlies the common idea of R. Akiba's superiority.

37. Apart from the content, which also deals with Moses and the Red Heifer, this tradition appears to be juxtaposed here on account of the tradent. We have a tradition attributed to R. Aha at [A], to R. Yose bar Hanina [B], and then R. Aha in the name of R. Yose bar Hanina [C]. There follows yet another tradition attributed to R. Aha in the name of R. Hanina.

38. See the variants in *PRK* p. 73 line 1. However, in cases such as this, one must assume that the reading has been influenced by the Bavli and is secondary.

39. See e.g. the commentary of Maharzu to *NumR* 19:6 (79b), and see Mandelbaum's note to line 11, p. 72, in his edition of *PRK*. And see Levine, "Reading Crowned Letters."

40. This is the reading of the printings. The mss read *qotsah*; see below in this chapter.

41. Alternatively, Mar Uqba's statement can be understood as a figurative expression of the limitless potential of Torah. And see Yaakov Elman, "It Is No Empty Thing: Nahmanides and the Search for Omnisignificance" *The Torah u-Madda Journal* 4 (1993), 3. There is an interpretation of Song 5:11 in terms of letters and scribal writing found in Palestinian sources, *LevR* 19:1 (413) and *ShirR* 5:11, also based in part on taking *qevutsotav* (locks of hair) as tips [of letters] (*qots*; see Margoliot's notes on p. 413 to lines 5–6, and the printings and mss variants). But there is nothing here about deriving laws from the tips/crowns. See too bHag 13b where the angel Sandalfon ties crowns, apparently real crowns for God, not the crowns of letters.

42. Shlomo Naeh, "Did Rabbi Akiva Interpret the Crowns of the Letters? The Rabbis and the Holy Script." Lecture at the conference Jewish and Other Imperial Cultures in Late Antiquity, University of Pennsylvania (April 2008). bShab 104a contains an aggadic interpretation based on the way the "crown (*tag*) of the *qoph*" opens toward the *resh*. However, this is not really an exegesis of a biblical passage but of the order of the alphabet, and it has no legal implications.

43. See too Ra'anan Boustan, *From Martyr to Mystic* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), 69–70.

44. The phrase also appears in yHag 2:1, 77b.

45. The phenomenon of the Bavli borrowing an Aramaic narrative passage and translating it to Hebrew is not uncommon. See *TS*, 326 n. 33.

46. The parallel situation even seduced Yonah Fraenkel to cite the passage from bHul 137b in connection with his analysis of the story, despite the fact that it violates his general principle of "closure," that each rabbinic story should be analyzed independently (see *TS*, 9–10). But here Fraenkel notes: "Here too we must ask whether invoking a distant 'text' such as this does not violate the closure of the story, and again the answer is that this explanation [provided by comparison with the 'distant text'—J.R.] fits the inner unity of story to such a degree, such that it cannot be an error" ("Hermeneutic Problems," 167–68).

47. *CBT*, 16–38; *TS*, 270–72.

48. Elman, "Righteousness as Its Own Reward," 35–67. See too Elman, "The Suffering of the Righteous in Palestinian and Babylonian Sources," *JQR* (1990), 315–39. Rosenberg, "Otiot ukhetarim," 557, states: "undoubtedly the fundamental assumption at the root of this aggada cannot hold that there is no reward and punishment in the world"; he therefore resorts to a forced interpretation of what "reward" means. I think his discomfort is the exact reaction the storytellers wish to produce (though the forced explanation is not!).

49. These intertexts contribute to the larger Talmudic context, though here I am

emphasizing the uniqueness of our story even as it engages issues and ideas found elsewhere.

50. Three of the stories appear within a lengthy aggadic passage in bShab 88b–89a, together with a story that begins with a variation of this formula, "At the time when Moses descended before the Holy One, blessed be He . . . ." The fourth story appears in bSanh 111a (quoted below). On the stories in Shabbat see the analysis of Levinson, *The Twice-Told Tale*, 282–90.

51. Cited by Fraenkel in "Hermeneutic Problems," 165.

52. *Midrash Aggadah* to Num 14:17, ed. Salomon Buber (Vienna, 1894), 2:109.

53. See too bBB 16a and Ber 32a for attestations of the phrases "restrains your hand" and "his strength failed him" in contexts relating to theodicy.

54. Cited according to ms M. (There are a few manuscript variants but they do not change the substance of the passage.) Although introduced by the term *tanya*, this source is not a *baraita* but a pseudo-*baraita* and contains some Aramaic. See too Rashi's commentary to Num 14:18.

55. See e.g. Psalms 13:2–4, "How long, O Lord, will You ignore me forever? How long will You hide Your face from me? How long will I have cares on my mind, grief in my heart all day . . . "; Psalms 22:2–3, 44:10–16, etc.

Chapter 10 *Conclusion*

1. Particularly interesting therefore is the use of *savar*, "he thought," for Jesus's reaction to his master's gesture: "He [Jesus] thought that he was pushing him away." As we often find in Bavli aggadot, mistaken inferences are introduced in this way, as if to signal that he thought (incorrectly). Here Jesus mistakenly thought that his master was rejecting him again. See e.g. bSanh 101b.

2. It is also possible that such elements were added to the story in Geonic times.

3. See Chapter 3, "Sources, Stock Phrases, and Motifs," #4.

4. See *TS*, 256–59, on supplements and expansions.

5. On the exact text of the proverb, see Friedman, "A Good Story," 84–85.

6. Boyarin, *Carnal Israel*, 154.

7. See Rashi, ad loc., s.v. *ki hai*.

8. See Shamma Friedman, "La'aggada hahistorit batalmud habavli," in *Saul Lieberman Memorial Volume*, ed. S. Friedman (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary, 1993), 128, which notes that the commentator *Iyyun Ya'akov* published in *Ein Ya'akov* explains that R. Ishmael b. R. Yose also performed surgery on himself, emptying out his abdominal fat to test for worms!

9. Friedman, "La'aggada hahistorit," 139: "In bBB 58a: 'R. Banaa was marking out [burial] caves,' 'She [Sarah] is looking at his head,' 'The beauty of Rav Kahana,'

'They slandered him before the emperor.' In bBM: 'The beauty of R. Yohanan' (84a), 'I was looking at his hair' (84b), 'Resh Laqish was marking out [burial] caves of the rabbis' (85b), 'He slandered him' (86a)."

10. Ibid., 139 n. 106.

11. See *TS*, 258–59.

12. Friedman, "A Good Story," 73–76.

13. To rub off the dirt (*shifshef*). See Jastrow, *Dictionary*, 1619.

14. Friedman implies that the Babylonian Amoraim inherited the doubled tradition from the PT and introduced other changes: "The language was restyled, and an embellishment was added in the form of a challenge by a younger sage. Neither of these operations requires the unique talents of the discursive commentators, and can be attributed to earlier Babylonian recasters of Palestinian material" ("A Good Story," 76).

15. This kind of duplication, including this very example, was actually noted by Hanokh Albeck some time ago. See *Mavo latalmudim*, 479 n. 43. Albeck provides similar examples on pp. 478–79 and nn. 42–43.

16. A scholarly desideratum that would help distinguish Amoraic and Stammaitic processes of composition is comprehensive study of the stories of the PT. The most detailed study to date is Catherine Hezser's, *Form, Function and Historical Significance of the Rabbinic Story in Yerushalmi Nezikin* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1993). Hezser has a minimalist definition of a story; she includes brief halakhic case-stories together with the lengthier aggadic narrative studies here. Among the eighty stories she identifies in these tractates are six series of two or three stories. She observes that: "While the short halakhic stories exhibit a parallel style, the 'aggadic' narratives vary greatly in their form and only share with each other certain phrases or formulas which appear at their end" (281). For example, two consecutive stories climax in gentiles observing, "Blessed be the God of the Jews." Stock phrases such as this differ greatly from the extensive structural parallels found in story cycles in the BT. Clearly more research is needed on this point, but based on Hezser's study it appears that the type of patterned structures found in story cycles we have studied are limited to the Bavli [7, 8], which supports assigning them to the Stammaim.

17. In addition, a proximate halakhic tradition is attributed to the pair.

18. This differs from the preceding *baraita*, in which the departures from the Toseftan version (such as the different view of halakhic conflict) were not necessarily deliberate changes but could have resulted from subconscious errors.

19. Albeck, *Mavo latalmudim*, 47–50.

20. The legal *baraitot* of the Bavli also differ to some extent from parallel versions found in the Tosefta and other Tannaitic collections. However, these changes—unlike those in these narrative *baraitot*—seem to have resulted mostly from a subconscious process related to memorization and transmission in the Amoraic period.

On the status of these "Bavli" legal *baraitot* and of other *baraitot* without parallel in the Tannaitic corpora, see Yaakov Elman, "Babylonian Baraitot in the Tosefta and the 'Dialectology' of Middle Hebrew," *AJSR* 16 (1991), 1–29.

21. See Yair Lorberbaum's masterful study, *Image of God: Halakhah and Aggadah* (Tel Aviv: Schocken, 2004), 113–17 (Hebrew). Apart from the apologetic motives of the Geonim, Lorberbaum identifies other factors: Protestant conceptions of Judaism as a legalistic religion, the influence of legal formalism, contemporary traditional ("yeshiva") study that focuses on Talmudic halakha and legal codes to the exclusion of aggada, and more (pp. 117–26). For other scholars who argue against separating halakha and aggada, see the references there, p. 106 n. 5. See too Abraham Joshua Heschel, *Heavenly Torah as Refracted through the Generations*, trans. Gordon Tucker (New York: Continuum, 2005), 21, which also traces the unfortunate tendency to separate aggada from halakha back to the Geonim.

22. Moshe Simon-Shoshan, "Halakhic Mimesis: Rhetorical and Redactional Strategies in Tannaitic Narrative," *Diné Yisrael* 24 (2007), 123. See the entire English section of that volume, entitled, "Halakhah and Aggadah," edited by A. Edrie and S. L. Stone, which includes an article by Yair Lorberbaum, "Reflections on the Halakhic Status of Aggadah," 29–64; and the section "Law as Narrative, Narrative as Law," containing articles by Suzanne L. Stone, "On the Interplay of Rules, 'Cases,' and Concepts in Rabbinic Legal Literature: Another Look at the Aggadot on Honi the Circle-Drawer," 125–56; and Barry Wimpfheimer, "Talmudic Legal Narrative: Broadening the Discourse of Jewish Law," 157–96.

23. The PT interpolates a later comment here: "Some repeaters [of traditions (*tannaim*)] teach 'one hundred' [Passovers]. Some repeaters teach 'two hundred.' Some repeaters teach 'three hundred.' The one who says 'one hundred' [refers to] Regular [sacrifices]. The one who says 'two hundred' [refers to] Regular [sacrifices] and the Additional [sacrifices] for Sabbaths. The one who says 'three hundred' [refers to] Regular [sacrifices] and the Additional [sacrifices] for Sabbaths, festivals, new months and appointed times." In other words, the PT itself is aware of three minor variants relating to the number of "Passovers" Hillel asserted.

24. Here the PT contains a brief interpolation of several Amoraic comments concerning the issue of creating a *gezeira shava* oneself.

25. However, when analyzed closely, this claim probably reduces to one of the other three deductions, as the legal analogy must have a logical or scriptural basis.

26. The BT refers to this principle as *pok hazi*, "Go out and see what the people are doing." See bBer 45a, bMen 35b, etc.

27. The only hint of conflict is the description that the people "congregated around him" (*havru alav*; E2), which has an aggressive tinge. See e.g. bBB 11a, bBes 20a, bYev 84a. But this is quite subtle, and the people immediately are persuaded.

28. Granted, the story does not state explicitly that the Bnei Betera are the cur-

rent leaders, the Nesiim, but I think this point is implicit. If it is not, why bother mentioning them at all? True, the addition of this section in the Talmuds explains why the people did not know the law, which is unclear in the Tosefta; but this is clarified anyway in the next section, which states that they "forgot" the law. The PT infers that the Bnei Betera were the Nesiim in its discussion of the story; yPes 6:1, 33a. And see bBM 85a, which probably implies the same.

29. See Fraenkel, "Hermeneutic Problems," 156–57.

30. The main difference is the day upon which the people brought their Passovers, in sections N, whether that day or the next (and whether the query pertained to the Passover sacrifices or just to the knives). On this issue see Lieberman, *TK*, 4:567–68.

31. I do not consider it significant that the BT presents the story as a *baraita*, introducing it with the standard terminology "Our sages have taught," which the PT omits. The PT often lacks the technical terminology of the BT and frequently introduces Tosefta *baraitot* without introductory phrases.

32. Fraenkel, "Hermeneutic Problems," 156, notes that the location of the datum that Hillel taught "the whole day" differs in the two stories. In the BT it is recounted after his appointment (H), in the PT beforehand (G4). Here too, the BT is closer to the Tosefta, which reports Hillel's instruction after his appointment (P; though the Tosefta does not specify "the whole day").

33. David Rosenthal, "Transformation of Eretz-Yisrael Traditions in Babylonia," 30–36.

34. Ibid., 34–35, claims that the BT postdates the PT and omitted the three rejections of Hillel's arguments because Babylonians placed greater value on intellectual ability (*pilpul*) than on received tradition (*shemua*). Rosenthal's main evidence is that in the final part of the story the Bavli reverts to received tradition (O); apparently the BT editors let this mention of tradition slip through and neglected to revise. But he completely ignores the Tosefta in his entire discussion and therefore does not realize that here the BT is simply transmitting the Toseftan source. He has been influenced by the trend reflected in the title of his article. Of course, I agree with him that, in general, when we have parallels, the BT has revised the Palestinian traditions, as attested in the chapters of this book. Here, however, the opposite is the case. Nor does Rosenthal address the implications of Hillel's Babylonian provenance or other considerations I mention below.

35. The Bavli's discussion of the story, bPes 66b, makes this explicit.

36. See e.g. *SifNum* 78 (72), *LevR* 13:1 (269).

37. Text according to ms M. Some mss read "Let the master say a word of aggada" for the opening request, and there are other variants.

38. On the previous folio, Rav Nahman asks R. Yitshaq a number of questions concerning the meaning of verses, most of which the latter answers by citing tra-

ditions of R. Yohanan. Rav Nahman also cites a tradition in R. Yitshaq's name in bShab 131b. And see Hyman, *Toledot*, 931.

39. See Heschel, *Heavenly Torah*, 23: "What the rabbi meant was, 'I know full well that Jacob died, but I am trying to interpret the verse in every possible way. It is possible to say that he did not die in the sense that the righteous, even in death, may be deemed alive, for their reputations and the recollection of their achievements endure forever.'"

Selected Bibliography

Albeck, Hanokh. *Mavo latalmudim*. Tel Aviv: Devir, 1969.

Avot derabbi natan. Edited by Solomon Schechter. Vienna, 1887. Reprint, Hildesheim, 1979.

Ben-Shalom, Israel. "'And I Took Unto me Two Staves: The One I Called Beauty and the Other I called Bands' (Zach. 11:7)." In *Dor-Le-Dor: From the End of Biblical Times up to the Redaction of the Talmud. Studies in Honor of Joshua Efron*, edited by A. Oppenheimer and A. Kasher. Jerusalem: Bialik, 1995, 215–34 (Hebrew).

Boyarin, Daniel. *Border Lines: The Partition of Judaeo-Christianity*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004.

———. *Carnal Israel: Reading Sex in Talmudic Culture*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1993.

Buechler, Adolph. "Mefaseah al rashei am qadosh." In *Jubilee Volume in Honour of Edward Mahler*, edited by A. Wertheimer et al. Budapest, 1937, 370–405.

Burns, Gerald. *Hermeneutics: Ancient and Modern*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992.

The Cambridge History of Judaism. Vol. 4, *The Late Roman-Rabbinic Period,* edited by Steven T. Katz. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006.

Charlesworth, James. "Jewish Interest in Astrology during the Hellenistic and Roman Periods." In *Aufstieg und Niedergang Römischen Welt II*.20/2, edited by W. Haase et al. Berlin: de Gruyter, 1987, 926–50.

*Creation and Composition: The Contribution of the Bavli Redactors (*Stammaim*) to the Aggada*. Edited by Jeffrey L. Rubenstein. Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 2005.

Dobin, Joel C. *To Rule Both Day and Night: Astrology in the Bible, Midrash and Talmud*. New York: Inner Traditions International, 1977.

Dorotheus. *Dorothei Sidonii: Carmen Astrologicum*. Translated by David Pingree. Leipzig: Teubner, 1976.

Edwards, Laurence I. "Rabbi Akiba's Crowns: Postmodern Discourse and the Cost of Rabbinic Reading." *Judaism* 49 (2000), 417–34.

Elman, Yaakov. "Righteousness as Its Own Reward: An Inquiry into the Theology of the Stam." *PAAJR* 57 (1991), 35–67.

———. "The Suffering of the Righteous in Palestinian and Babylonian Sources." *JQR* (1990), 315–39.

Epstein, Jacob Nahum. *Mavo lenusah hamishnah.* 2nd ed. Jerusalem: Magnes, 1964.

Firmicus Maternus. *Matheseos Libri VIII*. In *Ancient Astrology: Theory and Practice,* translated by Jean Rhys Bram. Park Ridge, NJ: Noyes Press, 1975.

Fisch, Menachem. *Rational Rabbis: Science and Talmudic Culture*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997.

Fraade, Steven. "Rabbinic Polysemy and Pluralism Revisited: Between Praxis and Thematization." *AJSR* 31 (2007), 1–40.

Fraenkel, Yonah. *The Aggadic Narrative: Harmony of Form and Content*. Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuhad, 2001 (Hebrew).

———. *Darkhei ha'aggada vehamidrash*. Givatayim: Yad Letalmud, 1991.

———. "Hermeneutic Problems in the Study of the Aggadic Narrative." *Tarbiz* 47 (1978), 139–72 (Hebrew).

———. *Iyyunim be'olamo haruhani shel sipur ha'aggada*. Tel-Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuhad, 1981.

———. "Paronomasia in Aggadic Narratives." *Scripta Hierosolymitana* 27 (1978), 27–51.

Friedman, Shamma. "A Good Story Deserves Retelling." In *Creation and Composition*, 71–100.

———. "La'aggada hahistorit batalmud habavli." In *Saul Lieberman Memorial Volume*, edited by Shamma Friedman. New York: Jewish Theological Seminary, 1993, 119–63.

———. "Pereq ha'isha rabba babavli." In *Mehqarim umeqorot*, edited by H. Dimitrovksi. New York: Jewish Theological Seminary, 1977, 277–441.

Gandz, Solomon. "The Origins of the Planetary Week, or The Planetary Week in Hebrew Literature." *PAAJR* 19 (1948–49), 213–54.

Gaster, Moses. *The Exempla of the Rabbis*. 1924. Reprint, New York: Ktav, 1968.

Gero, Stephen. "The Stern Master and His Wayward Disciple: A 'Jesus' Story in the Talmud and in Christian Hagiography." *JSJ* 25 (1994), 287–311.

Ginzberg, Louis. *Legends of the Jews.* 7 vols. Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1909–38.

———. *Perushim vehidushim birushalmi*. 4 vols. New York: Jewish Theological Seminary, 1941–47.

Goldenberg, Robert. "The Deposition of Rabban Gamaliel II: An Examination of the Sources." *JJS* 23 (1972), 167–90.

Goodblatt, David. *Rabbinic Instruction in Sasanian Babylonia*. Leiden: Brill, 1975.

Greenfield, J. C., and Sokoloff, M. "Astrological and Related Omen Texts in Jewish Palestinian Aramaic." *JNES* 48 (1989), 211–14.

Gruen, Erich S. *Diaspora: Jews amidst Greeks and Romans*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002.

Halivni, David Weiss. "Aspects of the Formation of the Talmud." *Creation and Composition*, 339–40.

———. *Meqorot umesorot*. 7 vols. Tel Aviv: Devir; Jerusalem: Jewish Theological Seminary; and Jerusalem: Magnes, 1968–2007.

———. *Midrash, Mishnah, and Gemara: The Jewish Predilection for Justified Law*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1986.

Harari, Yuval. "The Sages and the Occult." In *The Literature of the Sages*, vol. 3b, *Midrash and Targum*. Edited by S. Safrai et al. Philadelphia: Fortress Press; Assen: Royal Van Gorcum, 2006, 521–64.

Hasan-Rokem, Galit. "The Snake at the Wedding—A Semiotic Reconsideration of the Comparative Method of Folk Narrative Research." *ARV: Scandinavian Yearbook of Folklore* 43 (1987), 73–87.

Haupt, Paul. "Tobit's Blindness and Sara's Hysteria." *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 60 (1921), 71–95.

Hayes, Christine. "*Halakhah le-Moshe mi-Sinai* in Rabbinic Sources: A Methodological Case Study." In *The Synoptic Problem in Rabbinic Literature*, edited by Shaye J. D. Cohen. Providence, RI: Scholars Press, 2000, 61–118.

Herford, R. Travers. *Christianity in Talmud and Midrash*. 1903. Reprint, Clifton, NJ: Reference Book Publishers, 1996.

Hirshman, Marc. "Aggadic Midrash." In *The Literature of the Sages,* vol. 3b, *Midrash and Targum*. Edited by S. Safrai et al. Philadelphia: Fortress Press; Assen: Van Gorcum, 2006, 107–32.

Ho, Ahuva. *Sedeq and Sedaqah in the Hebrew Bible*. New York: Peter Lang, 1991.

Hyman, Aharon. *Toledot tannaim ve'amoraim*. London, 1910. Reprint, Jerusalem, 1964.

Jacobs, Louis. *Structure and Form in the Babylonian Talmud*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991.

Jaffé, Dan. *Le Talmud et les origines juives du christianisme: Jésus, Paul et les judéo-chrétiens dans la littérature talmudique*. Leiden: Brill, 2007.

Jastrow, Marcus. *A Dictionary of the Targumim, the Talmud Babli, and Yerushalmi and the Midrashic Literature*. Reprint, New York: Jastrow Publishers, 1967.

Kahana, Menahem. "On the Fashioning and Aims of the Mishnaic Controversy." *Tarbiz* 73 (2003), 51–64 (Hebrew).

Kalmin, Richard. *Jewish Babylonia between Persia and Roman Palestine*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2006.

Kaphir, Zivia. "Sipur talmudi al bet hamidrash ve'al ha'omed berosho." *Alei-Siah* 31–32 (1992), 198–206.

Klausner, Joseph. *Jesus of Nazareth*. Translated by H. Danby. 1925. Reprint, New York: Menorah, 1979.

Lauterbach, Jacob Z. "Jesus in the Talmud." *Rabbinic Essays*. New York: Ktav, 1951.

Levine, David. "Holy Men and Rabbis in Talmudic Antiquity." In *Saints and Role Models in Judaism and Christianity*, edited by J. Schwartz and M. Poorthuis. Leiden: Brill, 2004, 53–57.

Levine, Nachman. "Reading Crowned Letters and Semiotic Silences in Menachot 29b." JJS 53 (2002), 35–48.

Levinson, Joshua. *The Twice-Told Tale*. Jerusalem: Magnes, 2005 (Hebrew).

Levy, Jacob. *Woerterbuch ueber die Talmudim und Midraschim*. 4 vols. Berlin: B. Harz, 1924.

Licht, Chaim. *Ten Legends of the Sages: The Image of the Sage in Rabbinic Literature*. Hoboken, NJ: Ktav, 1991, 181–206.

Lieberman, Saul. *Greek in Jewish Palestine.* New York: Jewish Theological Seminary, 1942.

———. *Hellenism in Jewish Palestine*. New York: Jewish Theological Seminary, 1950, 203–8.

———. *Tosefet Rishonim.* 2 vols. 1937–39. Reprint, New York: Jewish Theological Seminary, 1999. (Retains pagination of original four-volume version.)

———, ed. *The Tosefta*. 4 vols. New York: Jewish Theological Seminary, 1955–88.

———. *Tosefta Ki-fshuta: A Comprehensive Commentary on the Tosefta*. 11 vols. New York: Jewish Theological Seminary, 1955–88.

Liss, Abraham, ed. *Diqduqei soferim hashalem: The Babylonian Talmud with Variant Readings: Tractate Sotah*. Jerusalem: Yad Harav Herzog, Institute for the Complete Israeli Talmud, 1979.

Mack, Hananel. "Al gevarim shehitpatu akh hata'am lo alah beyadam." In *Higayon L'Yona: New Aspects in the Study of Midrash, Aggadah and Piyyut, in Honor of Yonah Fraenkel,* edited by J. Levinson et al. Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 2006, 433–43.

Maier, Johann. *Jesus von Nazareth in der talmudischen Überlieferung.* Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1978.

Malter, Henry. *Masekhet ta'anit min talmud bavli*. New York: American Academy for Jewish Research, 1930.

Mehqerei Talmud 1. Edited by. Y. Sussman and D. Rosenthal. Jerusalem: Magnes, 1990.

Mehqerei Talmud 2. Edited by M. Bar-Asher and D. Rosenthal. Jerusalem: Magnes, 1993.

Mehqerei Talmud 3. Edited by Y. Sussman and D. Rosenthal. Jerusalem: Magnes, 2005.

Meir, Ofra. *The Darshanic Story in Genesis Rabba*. Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuhad, 1987 (Hebrew).

———. *Rabbi Judah the Patriarch: Palestinian and Babylonian Portrait of a Leader*. Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuhad, 1999 (Hebrew).

Mekhilta d'Rabbi Ishmael. Edited by H. S. Horowitz and I. A. Rabin. 2nd ed. Jerusalem: Wahrmann, 1970.

Mekhilta d'Rabbi Shimon bar Yohai. Edited by J. N. Epstein and E. Z. Melamed. Jerusalem: Mekize Nirdamim, 1955.

Midrash bereshit rabba. Edited by J. Theodor and H. Albeck. 3 vols. Berlin, 1912–36. Reprint, Jerusalem, 1965.

Midrash devarim rabbah. Edited by Saul Lieberman. 3rd ed. Jerusalem, 1974.

Midrash pesiqta rabbati. Edited by Meir Ish-Shalom. Vienna, 1880. Reprint, Tel Aviv, 1963.

Midrash Tanhuma. Edited by Salomon Buber. Vilna: Romm, 1885.

Midrash Tanhuma. New York: Horev, 1926.

Midrash Tannaim. Edited by David Hoffman. Berlin: H. Itzkowski, 1909.

Midrash vayiqra rabbah. Edited by Mordechai Margulies. Jerusalem, 1953–60. Reprint, New York, 1993.

Naeh, Shlomo. "Freedom and Celibacy: A Talmudic Variation on Tales of Temptation and Fall in Genesis and Its Syrian Background." In *The Book of Genesis in Jewish and Oriental Christian Interpretation*, edited by J. Frishman and L. van Rompay. Louvain: Peeters, 1997, 73–89.

———. "'Make Yourself Many Rooms': Another Look at the Utterances of the Sages about Controversy." In *Renewing Jewish Commitment: The Work and Thought of David Hartman*, edited by A. Sagi and Z. Zohar. Jerusalem: Hartman Institute and Hakibbutz Hameuhad, 2001, 851–75 (Hebrew).

———. "On Structures of Memory (and the Forms of Text) in Rabbinic Literature." In *Mehqerei Talmud 3*, 543–89 (Hebrew).

Neugebauer, O., and Van Hoesen, H. B. *Greek Horoscopes*. Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1959.

Neusner, Jacob. *A History of the Jews in Babylonia*. 3rd ed. Leiden, 1965–70. Reprint, Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1984.

———. *The Rabbinic Traditions about the Pharisees before 70*. 3 vols. Leiden: Brill, 1971.

Otsar HaGeonim: Thesaurus of the Geonic Responsa and Commentaries following the Order of Talmudic Tractates. Edited by B. M. Lewin. 13 vols. Haifa and Jerusalem, 1928–43.

Pesiqta derav kahana. Edited by Bernard Mandelbaum. New York: Jewish Theological Seminary, 1987.

Pingree, David. "Astrology and Astronomy." In *Encyclopaedia Iranica*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1987, 2:858–70.

———. "Classical and Byzantine Astrology in Sassanian Persia." *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 43 (1989), 227–39.

———. *From Astral Omens to Astrology, from Babylon to Bikaner*. Rome: Insituto per l'Africa e l'Oriente, 1997, 23–25.

Ptolemy's Tetrabiblos. Translated by J. M. Ashmand. North Hollywood, CA: Symbols & Signs, 1976.

Rabbinovicz, Raphaelo. *Diqduqei Sofrim: Variae Lectiones in Mischnam et in Talmud Babylonicum*. 12 vols. Reprint, New York, 1960.

Rosenberg, Michael. "Otiot ukhetarim." In *By the Well: Studies in Jewish Philosophy and Halakhic Thought Presented to Gerald J. Blidstein*, edited by U. Ehrlich et al. Beer-Sheva: Ben Gurion University Press, 2008, 529–64.

Rosenthal, David. "The Transformation of Eretz-Yisrael Traditions in Babylonia." *Cathedra* 92 (1999), 7–48 (Hebrew).

Rubenstein, Jeffrey L. "Criteria of Stammaitic Intervention in Aggada." In *Creation and Composition: The Contribution of the Bavli Redactors (*Stammaim*) to the Aggada*, edited by Jeffrey L. Rubenstein. Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 2005, 417–40.

———. *The Culture of the Babylonian Talmud*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003.

———. "The Sukkah as Temporary or Permanent Dwelling: A Study in the Development of Talmudic Thought." *HUCA* 64 (1993), 137–66.

———. *Talmudic Stories, Narrative Art, Composition, and Culture*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999.

Ruth Rabbah = "The Book of Ruth in Aggadic Literature and Midrash Ruth Rabbah." Edited by M. Lerner. Ph.D. dissertation, Hebrew University, 1971 (Hebrew).

Sachs, A. "Babylonian Horoscopes." *Journal of Cuneiform Studies* 6 (1952), 49–75.

Safrai, Shmuel. "Tales of the Sages in the Palestinian Tradition and the Babylonian Talmud." *Scripta Hierosolymitana* 22 (1971), 209–32.

Schaefer, Peter. *Jesus in the Talmud*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007.

Schwarzbaum, Haim. "The Hero Predestined to Die on His Wedding Day (AT 934B)." *Folklore Research Center Studies* 4 (1974), 223–35.

———. *Studies in Jewish and World Folklore.* Berlin: de Gruyter, 1968.

Sifra. Edited by Isaac Hirsch Weiss. Vienna, 1866. Reprint, NewYork: Om Publishing, 1947.

Sifre to Deuteronomy = *Sifre devarim*. Edited by Louis Finkelstein. New York: Jewish Theological Seminary, 1983.

Sifre to Numbers = *Sifre al sefer bamidbar vesifre zuta*. Edited by H. S. Horovitz. Leipzig, 1917. Reprint, Jerusalem: Wahrmann, 1966.

Sokoloff, Michael. *A Dictionary of Jewish Babylonian Aramaic*. Ramat-Gan: Bar Ilan University Press; Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002.

———. *A Dictionary of Jewish Palestinian Aramaic.* Ramat-Gan: Bar Ilan University Press, 1990.

Sperber, Daniel. *Nautica Talmudica*. Ramat-Gan: Bar Ilan University Press, 1986.

Steinmetz, Devora. "Agada Unbound: Inter-Agadic Characterization of Sages in the Bavli and Implications for Reading Agada." In *Creation and Composition*, 296–301.

———. "Must the Patriarch Know 'Uqtzin? The Nasi as Scholar in Babylonian Aggada." *AJSR* 23 (1998), 163–90.

Stern, David. "Midrash and Indeterminacy." *Critical Inquiry* 15 (1988), 132–62.

Stourdzé, H. "La fuite en Egypte de Josue b. Perahya." *REJ* 82 (1926), 133–56.

Stuckrad, Kocku von. *Das Ringen um die Astrologie: Jüdische und christliche Beiträge zum antiken Zeitverständnis*. Berlin: de Gruyter, 2000.

Syriac Book of Medicines (Syrian Anatomy, Pathology and Therapeutics, or "The Book of Medicines"). Translated by E. A. W. Budge. London: Oxford University Press, 1913.

Thompson, Stith. *Motif Index of Folk Literature*. 5 vols. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1955–58.

Urbach, Ephraim. *The Sages: Their Concepts and Beliefs*. Translated by I. Abrahams. Jerusalem: Magnes, 1979.

Vettius Valens D'Antioche: Anthologies, Livre I. Translated by J.-F. Bara. Leiden: Brill, 1989.

Yassif, Eli. *The Hebrew Folktale: History, Genre, Meaning*. Translated by Jacqueline S. Teitelbaum. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999.

This page intentionally left blank

General Index

Abaye, 51, 52, 173, 174
Abba Hilkiah, 73, 74
Abbahu, R., 1–2
Abba Yosef b. Dostenai, 84
Abdan (Abba Yudan), 19; punishments of, 22, 23, 28, 35; sources for, 34–35; symbolism of name of, 35, 204
Ablat, 151–53, 154, 159–60, 163–64, 278n56
Abraham, 168, 175, 176–77, 284n109, 285n109
academy, Stammaitic, 12–17, 21, 63, 65, 66, 70; and astrology, 55–57, 206–7; culture of, 14–15, 19, 114, 205–7; and Deposition of Rabban Gamaliel, 87, 89; and dialectical argumentation, 9, 12–13, 111, 206; versus family, 15–16, 90, 159; heads of, 42, 45, 55–57, 60, 84, 87, 90, 173, 206–7, 252n56; hereditary status in, 12, 28, 57, 83, 87, 206; hierarchy in, 12–14, 24–25, 187, 205–6; versus livelihood, 42–48, 53, 57, 58, 59, 60, 249n21; and master-disciple stories, 127; and Moses-Akiba story, 198; and multivocal view of truth, 110, 114; violence in, 13–14, 174; versus wives, 15–16, 90, 159
Ada b. Ahava, Rav, 58, 59, 60, 253n64
Adam, 199
Aesop, 4
aggada (lore; narrative; nonlegal traditions), 72, 89, 140, 169, 171, 178; borrowing in, 10; as didactic fiction versus history, 7–8; versus halakha, 1–7, 8, 18, 19, 39, 58, 59–60, 111–12, 113, 145, 169, 171, 178, 215, 216, 217, 229–30, 242n32; literary techniques used in, 8; and master-disciple stories, 91, 99, 111–12, 113, 114, 145, 229–30; order of passages in, 90; and pseudo-*baraitot*, 215; and R. Abbahu, 1–2; Stammaitic, 17–18; Stammaitic versus Amoraic, 9–11
Aggadot HaTalmud, 162
Aha, R., 194, 195, 288n37
Ahitofel, 51
Akiba, R. (R. Akiba b. Yosef), 20, 286n17, 288n36; and Deposition of Rabban Gamaliel, 83, 85, 87; martyrdom of, 189, 197, 199, 208; and Moses, 182–202, 204, 205, 206, 207, 208; in the privy, 212–13; stories of daughter of, 152, 154–57, 162–66, 169, 178, 204, 210, 275n11

Albeck, Hanokh, 215, 291n15
am ha'arets (nonrabbinic Jews), 5, 15, 78, 80
Ami, R., 3–6, 36, 37, 38, 39
Ammon and Moab and the poorman's tithe, 93–94
Amoraim, 23, 31, 33, 34, 36–37, 39, 66, 88, 134, 214, 217–28; and astrology stories, 158, 165, 166, 169, 170, 173, 175–76, 178, 252n56; Babylonian, 16, 173, 291n14; collections of stories by, 277n41; composition methods of, 207, 208, 209, 212, 227–28; disciple-circles of, 15, 16–17, 111, 239n26, 267n28; and master-disciple stories, 108, 113; Palestinian, 16, 173; and pseudo-*meimrot*, 214; versus Stammaim, 8–13, 16–17, 18, 158, 165, 170, 178, 207, 208, 217, 278n56, 291n16
Aramaic language, 10, 88, 94, 98, 107, 140, 173, 198, 265n7, 278n58, 289n45, 290n54
Aristobolus, 175
Ashi, Rav, 9, 167, 168, 173, 206, 279n68, 282n92
Asi, R., 3–6
Asmodeas, 155
astrology, 20, 41, 43, 44, 46, 54–57, 251n46, 278n57, 282n95; and academy headship, 55–57, 206–7; and Christianity, 178; versus genealogy, 252n56; and Jews, 171–75, 176–78; Judaization of, 173–75; and Midrash, 174, 175–78; and Mishna, 172; Palestinian, 171–75; prohibitions against, 283n106, 285n109; and prophecy, 55, 172; and R. Akiba's daughter, 275n11
Avia, Rav, 246n50
Avimelekh the Ethiopian, 72–73
Avtalion, 218, 221, 222, 223, 225

"bald on both sides," parable of, 3–6
Banaa, Rabbi, 210
baraitot (external teachings), 32; and BT, 91, 100, 108, 112; and master-disciple stories, 117–20, 128, 134, 140–44; and Mishna, 38, 41–42, 48, 49, 50–51, 61. *See also* pseudo-*baraitot*; Tosefta
Bavli (Babylonian Talmud; BT): abstract formulations in, 51, 52; and *baraitot*, 91, 100, 108, 112; characters in, 2, 5, 7, 21, 34–35, 52, 71, 74, 134, 139, 165; and Christianity, 127, 147–48; culture of, 11–17, 57, 205; drama in, 52; exegesis in, 120, 121, 123, 124; motifs in, 11–12; and oral tradition, 172; versus PT, 9, 10, 11, 16, 20, 38–39, 68–72, 74, 80, 116, 134–42, 145, 161–62, 211, 293n31; rabbinization in, 121, 123, 124, 135–36, 266n22; sources for, 3, 116; versus Tannaitic sources, 110–11, 291n20; and Tosefta, 291n20, 293nn31,34
Ben Azai, 210
Ben-Shalom, Israel, 33, 35
Beribbi, 36, 37
Bialik, Haim Nahman, 6, 237n6
Book of Job, 70
Book of Tobit, 155
borrowing, 10, 29, 31, 33, 53–58, 81–82, 139, 141, 164–65, 199, 200, 208; within BT, 207–8; from external sources, 208; and patterning, 211
Boyarin, Daniel, 110–11, 210, 238n16, 263n52, 287n26

Christianity, 12, 116, 270n62, 272n96, 273n99; and astrology, 178; and BT, 127, 138, 147–48; celibacy in, 16; master-disciple stories in, 146–48. *See also* Jesus

composition, 19, 128, 134, 142, 151, 153, 156–59, 169, 182, 204, 207–15, 227–28; Amoraic versus Stammaitic, 207, 208, 209, 212, 227–28
Cover, Robert, 6–7
culture: Amoraic versus Stammaitic, 228; of BT, 11–17, 57, 205; Jewish appropriation of, 175; Palestinian versus Babylonian, 18; rabbinic versus biblical, 113, 120, 128; Sassanian (Persian), 12, 25, 171, 206, 207; shame-and-honor, 14–15, 19, 25–26, 65, 67, 98, 114, 206, 240n31; Stammaitic, 11–17, 114, 205–6. *See also* academy, Stammaitic
The Culture of the Babylonian Talmud (Rubenstein), 11–17, 57, 205
Cyril of Scythopolis, 146–47, 273n99

"dangerous place" motif, 44–45, 46, 54, 248n14, 251n44, 252n62; and unsound structures, 58–60, 216
Dead Sea Scrolls, 171, 281n79
dialectical argumentation (*shaqla vetarya*), 8, 19, 21, 28, 60–61, 65, 69, 87, 227, 239n20; in BT versus Tannaitic sources, 110–11; in Stammaitic academy, 9, 12–13, 111, 206
dialogue, 203; in master-disciple stories, 229, 230, 259n2; and patterning, 209; shared, 80, 82, 116, 196; threefold, 39, 204
Dimi b. Kakozita, 167, 173, 279n68
Diogenes Laertes, 73
Doeg, 51, 137
duplication, 35, 211–14

Eight Creeping Things (Tractate Shabbat 14), 118, 121, 130
Eleazar b. Azariah, R., 83–90, 111, 206, 207, 211, 257n12, 258n36, 260n13, 264n58
Eleazar b. Pedat, R., 107, 250n37
Eleazar b. R. Shimon, R., 210, 263n57; weight of, 35–36
Eleazar b. Shamua, R., 32, 107
Eleazar Hisma, R., 91, 95, 100, 112
Eliezer, R., 32, 94, 196, 259n7, 260n19, 261nn35,37, 262n39, 288n36; and law of the Red Heifer, 194–95; and pseudo-*baraitot*, 214; and R. Yose b. Dormasqit, 93–100, 104–6, 107, 108, 113, 114, 204, 214, 261n32
Eliezer b. R. Yose Haglili, 263n57
Elijah, 53, 210, 286n6
Elisha, 20, 116, 117–18, 141, 273n101; and Gehazi, 116, 117–18, 120–32, 134–37, 142–45, 148, 209; punishments of, 143, 144
Elisha b. Abuya, 24, 266n18, 266n26
Elman, Yaakov, 199, 239n31
Elon, Ari, 164
The Epic Histories Atrributed to P'awstos Buzand, 146, 147
Epimenides, 73
Epstein, Jacob Nahum, 39
Eyn Yaakov, 162

Firmicus Maternus, 172, 281n87
Fisch, Menahem, 96, 190
folklore, 154–55, 275n11, 276nn23,32; and Honi's Long Sleep, 62–65, 67–68, 69, 70, 73
Fraade, Steven, 263n52
Fraenkel, Yonah, 32, 155, 242n32, 255n25, 289n46; on Honi's Long Sleep, 67, 68, 70–71, 74; on Moses-Akiba story, 182, 188
Friedman, Shamma, 9, 10, 106, 107, 108, 210, 241n32; on duplication, 212–13

Gamaliel, Rabban, Reinstatement of, 211–12
Garsoïan, Nina G., 146
Gaster, Moses, 68, 72, 73
Gehazi: and Elisha, 116, 117–18, 120–32, 134–37, 142–45, 148, 205, 208, 209, 266n14; and Joshua-Jesus story, 20, 137, 141, 204, 216
genealogy (*yihus*): and academy headship, 206; versus astrology, 252n56; and Hillel and the Passover Sacrifice, 227; and status, 12, 28, 57, 83, 87, 206
Geonim, 12, 16, 57, 88, 206, 215, 292n21
Gero, Stephen, 146–48, 272n94, 273n99
Geviha of Be Katil, Rav, 240n31
Ginzberg, Louis, 16, 86
God: and Abraham, 168, 176–77, 285n109; and Moses, 22, 128, 182–202, 204, 207, 216, 287n28; and punishment, 189, 192, 193, 197–99, 201; and time, 188
Goldenberg, Robert, 18, 77, 81–82, 86

halakha (law), 23–24, 25, 30–31, 32, 36–39, 53–54, 72, 82, 89, 96, 97, 99, 107, 109, 140, 145, 169, 171, 178, 183, 184, 195, 224, 229–30; versus aggada, 1–7, 8, 18, 19, 39, 58, 59–60, 111–12, 113, 145, 169, 171, 178, 215, 216–17, 229–30, 242n32; and literary devices, 90, 208, 209, 213; on marriage, 35; and Mishna, 216–17; and pseudo-*meimrot*, 214; and R. Hiyya b. Abba, 1–3, 8; sources of, 225–26; and Stammaim, 215; Tannaim on, 207; and Torah, 187–88; and women, 36–39
Halivni, David Weiss, 9, 239n20, 240n32, 241n32
Hanan HaNehba, 73
Hanina, R., 159, 281n85, 283n101, 288n37; and astrology stories, 167, 168, 169, 170, 171, 175, 176
Harris, J. Rendel, 73
Hasan-Rokem, Galit, 154
Hebrew language, 10, 112, 198, 278n58, 289n45; in master-disciple stories, 94, 98, 140
henpecked husband, parable of, 3–6
Herford, R. Travers, 138
Hezser, Catherine, 88, 291n16
Hilfai. *See* Ilfa
Hillel and the Passover Sacrifice, 217–28, 229; and Amoraim, 217–28; in BT, 217–23, 225, 226, 227; in PT, 217–23; sources of, 217, 224–27; in Tosefta, 217–23
Hirshman, Menahem, 242n32
Hisda, Rav, 196
Hiyya, R. (Hiyya Rabba, R.), 21–23, 30–32, 33, 41, 48, 50, 248n6
Hiyya b. Abba, R., 8, 163; and R. Abbahu, 1–3
Hiyya b. Ashi, R., 165
Honi the Circle-Drawer, 62–76, 99, 255n23; punishment of, 68; and rainmaking, 73–74
honor. *See* culture: shame-and-honor; shame
Hoshaya/Oshaya, R., 42, 248n6
Huna, Rav, 44, 59, 252n62

Ilfa (Hilfai), 19, 41–61, 57, 204, 206
irony, 2, 155, 226, 272n96; as literary device, 8, 19, 203, 204
Irving, Washington, 73
Isaac, R., 54
Ishmael b. R. Yose, R., 21–28, 31, 33, 35, 37, 39, 204, 247n73; and liter-

ary devices, 203, 210; and Stammaitic culture, 205, 206; weight of, 35–36
Israel has a planet/Israel has no planet (*mazal*), 150–52, 154, 168–71, 175–77
Issachar b. Barkai, 139

Jacob, 228, 229, 294n39
Jameson, Fredric, 17
Jeremiah, 72–73, 229
Jeroboam, 136–37, 138
Jesus, 266n26, 290n1; and Gehazi, 137, 204, 216, 269n55; heresy of, 20, 119, 125, 127, 133, 140, 141, 142, 145; historicity of, 116, 147; and Joshua b. Perahia, 116, 117, 119, 124–27, 128, 131, 132–33, 134, 137–42, 145, 148, 272n94; and literary devices, 204, 205, 209, 211
Jethro, 128
Job, 255n23
Josephus, 62, 175
Joshua b. Perahia, R., 20, 116, 117, 118–19, 144, 145, 269n57, 273n101; and Jesus, 116, 117, 119, 124–27, 128, 131, 132–33, 134, 137–42, 145, 148, 272n94; and literary devices, 204, 205, 208, 209, 211
Judah b. Tabbai, 137–38, 147, 269n57, 273n101

Kahana, Rav, 98, 239n23
Kalmin, Richard, 240n32
keywords, 19, 94, 203, 204
Klausner, Joseph, 138

leprosy, 267n39; of Abdan, 28, 35, 267n39; of Gehazi, 118, 120, 121, 123, 125, 130, 131, 135, 267n37; and heresy, 269n55
Levine, Nachman, 182, 184, 285, 286, 288
Levinson, Joshua, 120
Lieberman, Saul, 150
livelihood, 85; versus study, 42–48, 53, 57, 58, 59, 60, 249n21
The Lives of the Monks of Palestine (Cyril of Scythopolis), 146–47

Mandel, Paul, 159
Mar b. Rav Ashi, 55, 56, 57, 60
Mar Uqba, 196, 197, 199, 289n41
Matheseos (Firmicus Maternus), 172
mazal (planet). *See* Israel has a planet/Israel has no planet
meimrot (attributed statements), 12, 214
Meir, R., 24, 36, 37, 38, 39, 48, 49, 50, 192, 247n73, 248n8, 273n100, 287n29
Mekhilta, 128
Mekhilta deRabbi Shimon b. Yohai, 128
Midrash (exegesis), 6; and astrology stories, 174, 175–78; in master-disciple stories, 229–30; and Moses-Akiba story, 190, 192, 194, 196, 200; Palestinian, 11, 19; pseudo-, 174
Midrash Tehillim, 193
Mishna (oral tradition), 3, 6, 19, 31, 35, 36–39, 42, 45, 48, 50–51, 71, 74, 86, 88–89, 96, 97, 107, 108, 109, 111–12, 121, 136, 137, 142–46, 169, 170, 172, 184, 185, 216, 217; and *baraitot*, 38, 41–42, 48, 49, 50–51, 61; borrowing from, 208; and halakha, 216–17; and Hillel and the Passover Sacrifice, 224, 226; repetition in, 204; and women, 258n36
mnemonic devices, 74, 138, 184, 262n41, 274n4, 281n85; in astrology stories, 170, 172; and literary devices, 204, 205, 214; memory palace, 108–9

monologue, interior, 64, 203, 204–5
Moses, 20, 260n19, 261n35; and God, 22, 128, 182–202, 204, 207, 216, 287n28; and Greek philosophers, 175; and master-disciple stories, 95, 97, 108, 128, 136; and the Red Heifer, 288n37
Motif Index of Folk Literature (Thompson), 154–55
Muslims, 178

Naaman, 117–18, 120, 125, 129–31, 134, 135
Naeh, Shlomo, 95, 108–9, 197, 262n41, 263n49
Nahman, Rav, 228–30, 246n50, 250n32, 293n38
Nahman b. Yitshaq, Rav, 8, 22, 28, 34, 280n72; in astrology stories, 152–53, 156–57, 165–70, 173, 178
Nahum of Gamzu, 59, 60, 249n16
names, symbolic, 19, 203, 204, 279n68
New Criticism, 8, 238n10
"*Nomos* and Narrative" (Cover), 6–7

oral tradition. *See* Mishna
order, narrative, 89, 124, 134, 135, 142, 144
order, temporal, 45, 121–22, 153, 155, 162, 203, 205
"Oven of Akhnai," 114

Palestine: Amoraim in, 16, 173; astrology in, 171–75; culture of, 18; Midrash in, 11, 19; sources in, 11, 12, 29, 208. *See also* Yerushalmi
paronomasia. *See* wordplay
patterning, 82, 162, 209–11; and duplication, 212, 213–14; summary, 209–10, 213–14; weak, 210–11
Philo, 175
Pinhas, R., 30
Plato, 175
poorman's tithe, in Sabbatical year, 93–94
prophecy, 55–56
pseudo-*baraitot*, 108, 214–15, 245n26, 258n28, 271n76, 290n54; and Deposition of Rabban Gamaliel, 88; and Joshua-Jesus story, 141
pseudo-*meimrot*, 214
Ptolemy, 172
punishment, 201, 225, 245n30, 246n50, 248n14; and astrology, 251n46; and dangerous situations, 54, 59; and theodicy, 189, 192, 193, 197–99
Pythagoras, 175

Rabbah b. Abahu, 53
Rabbah b. Rav Sheilah, 167, 173, 174
Rabbi. *See* Yehuda HaNasi, R.
rabbinization, 121, 123, 124, 135–36, 266n22
rabbis: criticism of, 148; culture of, 113, 120, 128; expansion of Torah by, 186–88, 190, 201; versus nonrabbis, 5, 15, 78, 80
Rashi, 55, 56, 113, 154, 255n24, 260n13
Rav, 168, 176, 177, 182, 185, 198, 214, 253n64
Rava, 39, 63, 66, 70, 88, 173, 174, 199, 208, 214, 215, 240n31, 246n50, 277n36
Ravina, 9
redactional context, 8, 19, 215–17; of astrology stories, 166–71; of Honi's Long Sleep, 71, 72, 73–74; of Ilfa's Desperate Challenge, 54, 58–60; of master-disciple stories, 111–14, 116, 117, 142–46
Red Heifer, law of, 194–95

Rehumei, Rav, 44
repetition, 23, 141, 184, 185, 201, 203; in astrology stories, 157, 170; and structure, 205; threefold, 8, 204
Resh Laqish, 28, 66, 72, 100, 239n23, 273n102
The Rest of the Words of Baruch (*IV Baruch*), 72, 73
"Righteousness as Its Own Reward" (Elman), 199
Robbins, F. E., 150
Romans, 12, 159, 189
Rosenthal, David, 226, 293n34
Rosen-Zvi, Ishay, 241n32

Sabas, 146
Sabbatical year, poorman's tithe in, 93–94
sages, 57, 58–60, 73–74, 113; Persian, 151–53, 154, 159–60, 163–64, 278n56; rabbinic versus biblical, 128, 187
sage stories, 170–71, 178, 184, 280n75
St. Epip'an, 146
Schwarzbaum, Haim, 154, 155
shame, 21, 26–28, 34, 39, 66, 70, 72, 114, 152, 154, 160, 162, 206, 227, 240n31; in master-disciple stories, 99–100. *See also* culture: shame-and-honor
Shema, 270n62
Shemaya, 218, 221, 222, 223, 225
Shimon b. Eleazar, R., 119
Shimon b. Elyaqim, R., 107, 108
Shimon b. Gamaliel, R., 49
Shimon b. Halafta, R., 30, 31
Shimon b. Rabbi, R., 21, 22, 23, 31
Shimon b. Shetah, 118, 126, 132, 138, 139, 211, 261n31, 270n64
Shimon b. Yohai, R., 212, 213; and the cave, 47–48, 57; and Deposition of Rabban Gamaliel, 86, 89
Shmuel, 36, 37, 38, 39, 44, 51, 58, 140, 247n73, 275n13, 278n56; and astrology, 151–57, 159–61, 163–64, 169
Shmuel b. Nahman, R., 242n32
Shmuel b. Nahmani, Rav, 137
Simon-Shoshan, Moshe, 215
slaves, 88
Socrates, 175
Sokoloff, Michael, 54, 55
sources, 7, 8, 17; for astrology stories, 151, 159–66; of halakha, 225–26; for Hillel and the Passover Sacrifice, 217, 224–27; for Honi's Long Sleep, 71, 72; for Ilfa's Desperate Challenge, 53–58; for master-disciple stories, 100–111, 114, 116, 126, 128, 134, 139, 142; for Moses's visit to R. Akiba, 182, 194–99, 208; Palestinian, 11, 12, 29, 208; for Shaming of Abdan, 29–36; Tannaitic, 110–11, 291n20
Stammaim, 230; versus Amoraim, 8–13, 16–17, 18, 158, 165, 170, 178, 207, 208, 217, 278n56, 291n16; and astrology stories, 158, 165, 166, 169, 170, 173, 174, 175–76, 177, 178; composition methods of, 207, 208, 209, 212, 227–28; culture of, 11–17; and Deposition of Rabban Gamaliel, 83, 86, 87, 89, 90; and Elisha-Gehazi story, 134; evidence for redaction by, 7, 29, 33, 35, 36, 60, 83, 90; and Honi's Long Sleep, 62, 63, 65, 69, 72, 73; and Joshua-Jesus story, 139–40; and master-disciple stories, 98, 99, 113, 114, 135; and Mishna, 216; and Moses-Akiba story, 196, 198–99; and R. Tsadoq's Firstling, 82–83; shame-and-honor culture of, 14–15, 19, 25–26, 65, 67, 98, 114, 206, 240n31; versus Tannaitic sources, 20; and theodicy, 182, 201

status, 65; hereditary, 12, 28, 57, 83, 87, 206; in Stammaitic academy, 12–14
Steinmetz, Devora, 83, 97
"The Stern Master and the Wayward Disciple" (Gero), 146
story cycles, 150, 151, 153, 158, 159, 166, 291n16; and patterning, 209, 210
structure, 13, 23, 43, 66, 80, 94, 119–27, 137, 141, 153, 156–66, 170, 177, 182, 185–86, 187, 189, 190, 192, 203, 205; and patterning, 209; and repetition, 205
subsistence. *See* livelihood
Sussman, Yaakov, 6
The Syriac Books of Medicines, 172

Taanit, 70, 71, 74
Talmudic Stories: Narrative Art, Composition, and Culture (Rubenstein), 7–11, 47
Tannaim, 13, 24, 52, 99, 207, 252n56, 263n52; and astrology, 283n106; versus BT, 110–11, 291n20; and master-disciple stories, 19, 91, 100, 106, 107, 108, 128, 134; and pseudo-*baraitot*, 214–15; versus Stammaim, 20
Tetrabiblos (Ptolemy), 172
theodicy, 20, 182–202, 207; and punishment, 189, 192, 193, 197–99; and Stammaim, 182, 201
Tindal, Matthew, 175
Torah, 200; and astrology, 174, 175; and halakha, 187–88; Oral, 187, 196, 286n17; prophet-disciple relationship in, 268n48; rabbinic expansion of, 186–88, 190, 201; and theodicy, 182–202
Tosefta, 106–7, 109, 111, 112, 262n41, 263n49; and BT, 291n20, 293nn31,34; Hillel and the Passover Sacrifice in, 217–23. See also *baraitot*
Trachtenberg, Joseph, 151
The Types of the Folk-Tale (Aarne-Thompson), 155

Urbach, Ephraim, 163, 279n61

violence, 98, 174, 227, 253n66; verbal, 13–14, 21

weddings, 152, 154–56
Weiss, Avraham, 86
wives, 204; versus academy, 15–16, 90, 159
women, 22, 25, 27, 28, 35, 36–39, 54, 152, 154, 155–56, 157, 162, 163–64, 166, 245n28, 258n36, 273n100; and halakha, 36–39; and temptation, 165
wordplay (paronomasia), 8, 19, 25, 28, 35, 45, 52, 67, 138, 203

Yalqut Shimoni, 30, 162
Yannai, King, 118, 132, 138–39, 140, 208, 211
Yassif, Eli, 159
Yehoshua, R., 19–20, 204, 206, 209, 259nn7,13, 283n101; in Deposition of Rabban Gamaliel, 83, 84–85, 89, 111; and Eleazar b. Azariah, 91–101, 93, 94–95, 97–99, 100, 104, 108, 112, 113; and Mishna, 216; in the privy, 212–13; in R. Tsadoq's Firstling, 77–81; in Reinstatement of Rabban Gamaliel, 211–12
Yehoshua b. Levi, R., 166, 169, 170, 171, 172, 174
Yehuda, Rav, 36, 51, 131, 138, 140, 168,

182, 185, 212, 284n109, 288n32; and pseudo-*meimrot*, 214
Yehuda b. Pedaya, 242n32
Yehuda b. Qenosia, R., 32
Yehuda b. Tabai, 128
Yehuda HaNasi, R., 24, 33, 38, 39, 198, 206, 245n33, 247n73
Yehuda the Ammonite, 84–85
Yerushalmi (Palestinian Talmud; PT), 3, 19, 161–62, 166; versus BT, 9, 10, 11, 16, 20, 38–39, 68–72, 74, 80, 116, 134–42, 145, 161–62, 211, 293n31; and Christian stories, 147–48; and Deposition of Rabban Gamaliel, 88, 89, 111; and duplication, 211, 212, 213; on *halitsah*, 38–39; and Hillel and the Passover Sacrifice, 217–23; and Honi's Long Sleep, 68–72, 74; and Ilfa's Desperate Challenge, 48–53; and master-disciple stories, 98, 100–111, 112, 113–14, 134–42, 145; and patterning, 209; and R. Tsadoq's Firstling, 80; rabbinization in, 266n22; and Shaming of Abdan, 29, 31, 34–35; on unsound structures, 60
Yitshaq, R., 113, 118, 130, 228–30, 293n38
Yitshaq b. R. Hiyya, R., 38
Yitshaq Napha, R., 3–6
Yohanan, R., 19, 28, 41, 42, 46, 47, 52, 56, 57, 59, 60, 62, 64, 66, 71, 72, 84, 100, 118, 121, 131, 163, 168, 170, 175, 176, 192, 198, 199, 216, 228, 229, 239n23, 263n57, 273n102, 284n107, 294n38; and academy headship, 206, 252n61; and astrology, 55, 177, 178; interior monologue of, 205
Yohanan b. Beroka, R., 91, 95, 100, 112
Yohanan b. Zakkai, R., 93, 105
Yose, R., 37, 38, 49, 192, 193, 216
Yose b. Dormasqit, R., 93–100, 104–108, 113, 114, 204, 214, 261n32
Yose b. Hanina, R., 194, 288n37
Yosef, Rav, 22, 26, 33, 34, 56, 57
Yudan b. Guria, R., 68

Zevid, Rav, 165
Zoroastrianism, 12

Source Index

BIBLE

Genesis
1, 174
15:1, 176
15:2, 176
15:3, 168, 176
15:4, 168, 176
15:5, 168, 176–77, 284n109
17:1,284n109
17:2, 284n109

Exodus
15:17, 30
18:3, 288n34
18:4, 195, 288n34
20:1, 93, 103, 263n49
20:2, 118
20:3, 118
23:14–17, 111
33, 287n28
33:12–13, 190, 191, 192, 194
33:13, 193
33:18, 191, 193, 288n31
33:19, 193, 288n31
33:20, 288n31
33:23, 288
34, 287n28
34:4–7, 287n28
34:6, 200, 201

Leviticus
6:3, 212
11:29–30, 121
13, 267n39

Numbers
9:3, 220
14:17, 199, 201, 290
14:17–18, 200
14:18, 290
29:2, 219–20

Deuteronomy
1:1, 96, 103
1:1–6:4, 259n110
4:12, 102
4:13, 103
6:4, 92, 102
6:4–9, 259n110
11:13–21, 259n110
14:22–29, 259n110
15:4, 41, 43, 53–54
15:11, 41, 43, 53–54
16:16–17, 111
17:14–20, 259n110
18:14, 283n106, 284n107
20:1, 103
21:1–9, 142
21:6–7, 143
21:7, 142
23:4, 85
25:7–10, 22, 36, 38
25:9, 38
26:12–19, 259n110
26:17, 101
26:17–18, 92, 95, 101
28:1–69, 259n110
31:10–13, 92, 101
31:11, 112–13
31:12, 92, 101, 112, 264n62
33:21, 136

I Kings
9:3, 23, 30
12:25–30, 118
14:16, 136

II Kings
2:11, 286n6
2:23–24, 143
2:23–25, 117, 132
5:16, 129
5:20, 129
5:23, 120
5:23–24, 117, 130
5:23–6:1, 120
5:25, 135
5:25–26, 117, 130–31, 266n12
5:26, 120, 134, 135
5:27, 118, 123, 130–31
6:1, 118, 123, 129, 267n35
6:2, 123
7:3, 118, 120, 121, 131
8, 122
8:1–6, 122
8:6, 149
8:7, 118, 120, 122, 131
8:16–24, 266n17
8–9, 122
13:14, 117, 132

I Chronicles
17:21, 92, 102

II Chronicles
7:16, 243

Isaiah
3:1–4, 242
10:13, 85
41:2, 169, 177, 284–85n109

Jeremiah
10:2, 168, 176, 283n105, 284n107
25:11, 64, 254n2
29:10, 64, 254n2
30:10, 228
30:21, 33
38:7, 72–73
49:6, 85

Hosea
5:15, 30–31, 245n37

Amos
3:7, 105, 107
5:19, 276n32
9:14, 85

Psalms
13:2–4, 290n55
17:14, 197
22:2–3, 290n55
25:14, 93, 105
37:20, 200
44:10–16, 290n55
103:7, 193
126:1, 62, 64, 68, 70, 254n2
144:14, 137

Proverbs
3:18, 102
6:25, 146
9:18a [LXX], 146
10:2, 152, 156, 161, 163, 181, 208, 276n27
11:4, 152, 156, 161, 163, 181, 208, 276n27

Job
2:2, 70
28:9, 288n36
28:9–12, 195
28:10, 194, 195
28:10–11, 195
28:11, 195, 288n36
31:32, 131

Song of Songs
5:11, 196, 289n41
7:5, 98

Lamentations
3:41, 21, 24, 31, 245n37

Qohelet
12:11, 92, 93, 96, 102, 103, 108, 276–77n32

Esther
7:5, 33

Daniel
2:2, 274n9

RABBINIC LITERATURE

MISHNA

Berakhot
1:5, 84, 88
4:5, 30–31

Shabbat
2:6, 54

Rosh Hashana
2:8–9, 86

Ta'anit
3:4, 60
3:5, 60
3:7, 216
3:8, 73
3:8–3:9, 74
3:11, 60

Megilla
1:7, 268n39

Hagiga
1:1, 111–13
1:8, 286n117
2:2, 138

Ketubot
4:6, 258n29
6:7, 42, 49, 248n8

Sotah
7:2, 264n64
7:8, 95, 264n64
9:5–9:6, 142
9:6, 142, 144

Gittin
5:6, 271n82
9:10, 268n51

Qiddushin
1:1, 249n22

Bava Metsia
4:5, 48

Sanhedrin
10:1, 137
10:2, 143–45, 269n55

Eduyot
4:8, 263n55

Menahot
3:7, 183
11:7, 84, 85, 88

Bekhorot
5:4, 79–80

Parah
1:1, 194–95

Nidda
5:6, 247n63

Yadayim
3:5, 258n29
4:3, 100, 104–8, 115
4:4, 85, 88

TOSEFTA

Demai
4:10, 258n40

Pesahim
4:13–14, 217–23

Hagiga
2:8, 138
2:9, 263n53

Sotah
7–9, 113–14
7:7, 264n64
7:9, 86, 88, 100–104, 111, 112
9:7, 107
14:9, 263n53

Qiddushin
5:17, 69

Bava Metsia
3:25, 244n14

Sanhedrin
7:1, 263n53
7:8, 32, 246n43
8:3, 278n59

Makhshirin
3:4, 138

Yadayim
2:15, 104
2:16, 100, 104–5, 106, 261n32

PALESTINIAN TALMUD

Berakhot
1:1, 246n41
4:1, 80, 87, 111, 211, 246n41, 246n52, 258n29
4:5, 30
5:1, 246n52
9:5, 212

Pe'a
8:9, 253n65

Sheviit
6:1, 100

Shabbat
2:6, 54, 250n41
3:3, 275n12
6:10, 159–61
8:6, 159

Pesahim
6:1, 217–23, 292–93n28

Ta'anit
1:4, 74
3:10, 68, 254n18
3:13, 60
4:2, 246n41

Megilla
1:11, 246n41

Moed Qatan
3:1, 114

Hagiga
1:1, 112, 264n65
2:1, 266n18, 289n44
2:2, 261n31, 267n33
3:4, 264n61

Qiddushin
1:1, 48, 49, 52

Sanhedrin
1:2, 114
6:6, 137, 141
6:8, 128–33, 141
10:2, 128–33, 144–45

BABYLONIAN TALMUD

Berakhot
5a, 199
5b, 250n34
7a, 192, 194
8b, 250n34
10a, 243n32
17a–b, 137, 269n54
27b, 80, 87
27b–28a, 18, 19, 77, 80, 111, 264n58
28a, 211
35a, 246n41
35b, 48
42b–43a, 52
45a, 292n26
48a, 139, 141, 211, 271n78
48b, 270n67
55a, 54
55b, 251n43
56a–b, 277n36
61a, 278n53
61b, 197, 198, 287n23
62b, 212
63a, 110, 244n16
64a, 56, 252n52, 278n59

Shabbat
10a, 252n58
15a, 33
32a, 250–51n41, 251n44
33b, 47, 250n33
46b, 34, 246n50
51a, 33
51b, 33
52a, 33
55a–b, 199
62a, 274–75n10
88b–89a, 290n50
89a, 199
95a, 275n19
102b, 270n69
104a, 289n42
110a, 278n59
118a, 278n53
118b, 279n66
119a, 250n33, 278n59
119b, 252n59
129a, 164, 275n12, 278n53
131b, 293–94n38
152b, 246n41
156a, 55
156a–b, 150
156b, 20, 159–61, 163, 277–78n44

Eruvin
9b, 246n41
15a, 270n69
18b, 278n53
21b, 196, 243n32
53a, 244n10
56a, 164, 278n54
63a, 100
80a, 33

Pesahim
3b, 245n36

49a, 239n24
50a, 250n34
50b, 258n34
57a–b, 33–34, 270n68
57b, 34
66a, 217–23
66b, 293n35
68b, 250n32
86b, 36
118b, 33

Yoma
19b, 140, 142
28a, 260n24
35b, 87, 265n110
38b, 242–43n32
72b, 88
84b, 258n30
86b, 267–68n39

Sukka
18a, 33
21b, 247n66
29a, 284n107
52a, 51, 52
53a, 243

Besa
15a, 260n24
15b, 252n58
20a, 292n27

Rosh Hashana
16b, 113, 251n42, 277n33
25a, 86

Ta'anit
5b, 228
11a, 252n59, 278n53
12a, 246n41
20b, 58, 251n44
21a, 19, 56, 58, 249n25
21a–b, 249n16
23a, 19
23b, 278–79n60
24a, 269–70n60
25a, 53, 250n37, 272n9

Megilla
10a, 262n39
27b, 32

Moed Qatan
15b, 269n55
16a, 140–41
27a, 278–79n60

Hagiga
3a, 88, 264n65
3a–b, 20, 91
3b, 111, 259–60n113
4b–5a, 54
13b, 289n41
14a, 242n32
15a, 244n7, 252n59, 266–67n26
15b, 51, 286n6
19a, 140
22b, 260n24
26a, 245

Nedarim
32a, 177, 284–85n109, 288n30
40a, 278n58

Nazir
23b, 258n34

Sotah
21a, 252n61
22b, 258n34
35a, 278n53
39a, 32, 244n10
40a, 1–3, 5–7
41a–b, 264n64
46b–47a, 142
47a, 20, 117–19, 128, 142, 144, 266n14, 270n67

Gittin
14b, 50
29b, 240n31
31b, 29
32b, 250n32
55b–56b, 271n82
55b–57a, 159
57a, 267n30
57b, 29
59a, 246–47n62
67b, 88

Qiddushin
31a, 279n66
33a, 246n41, 279n66
39b, 199, 251n44, 266n13
70b, 88
73a, 258n30
81a, 165, 278–79n60, 280n72
81b, 165

Bava Qama
59b, 242n32
60b, 237n1
81b, 32
117a–b, 239n23

Bava Metsia
30b, 250n39
33a, 250n39
58b, 26
59a, 114, 245n30
59b, 279n60, 286n6
83b–84a, 210
84a, 35, 66, 100, 245n32, 273n102, 290–91n9
84a–86a, 210
84b, 290–91n9
85a, 293n28
85b, 290–91n9
97a, 240n31
114b, 53

Bava Batra
5a, 279n65
8a, 242
9b–10a, 242
10a, 163, 278n53
10a–b, 277n33
11a, 292n27
12b, 55
16a, 254, 290n53
16b, 70
58a, 210, 290n9
75a, 100
91b, 258n34
132a, 4
145b, 242
152b, 270n69
156a, 247n73
174b, 53

Sanhedrin
7b, 32, 246n43
11a, 114, 265n110
18a, 245n36

21a, 33
24a, 33
26b, 165
29b, 33
33a, 275n19
43a, 140–42, 265n8, 271nn75–76
64b, 250n39
68a, 244n16
82b, 275n19
95a, 278n59
97a, 269n55
100a, 100
101b, 290n1
103a, 268n53
107a, 245n30
107b, 128–33, 142–43
111a, 290n50
111a–b, 200–201

Shevuot
36a, 140–41

Avoda Zara
10a, 140
10b 278n58
18b, 273n100
22a, 240
30a, 164, 275n12
46a, 140, 142
53b, 271n74

Horayot
13b, 32, 246n43
13b–14a, 269n59
14a, 252n52

Zevahim
73a, 258n30
73b, 258n30
96b, 248n7

Menahot
29a–32b, 183–84
29b, 20, 183, 195, 198
34b, 247n66
35b, 292n26
37a, 52
109b, 269n57

Hullin
7a, 107
7b, 108
57a, 37
89a, 263n57
132b, 53, 250n37
137b, 198, 289n46
141a–b, 248n6
142a, 251n44

Bekhorot
8b, 275n19
19b, 247n73
36a, 17–18, 19, 79–80

Arakhin
16a, 269n55

Meila
7b, 239n22

Nidda
25a, 33
32a, 247n73
52a, 247n73
66a, 35

TANNAITIC MIDRASHIM

Mekhilta d'Rabbi Ishmael
Bo
16, 264n61
Amalek
1, 128, 267nn31–32, 272n88, 273n101
Pisha
1:1, 284n107

Mekhilta d'Rabbi Shimon bar Yohai
18:6, 128, 267nn31–32, 272n88, 273n101

Sifre Numbers
78, 293n36
103, 288n31

Sifre Deuteronomy
41, 260n21
114, 53–54
118, 53–54
218, 278n53
306, 237n4

Midrash Tannaim
15:4, 53–54
23:10, 250n40

AMORAIC MIDRASHIM

Avot derabbi natan
version A
18, 262n41, 263n54

Avot derabbi natan
version B
12, 195, 288n 36
37, 287n25

Genesis Rabbah
1:4, 287n25
10:2, 246nn51–52
12:9, 242n32
44:12, 284n107
65:21, 252n59
84:5, 242n32
91:9, 250n40

Leviticus Rabbah
2:6, 250n38
13:1, 293n36
19:1, 289n41
20:3, 278n59
29:1, 287n25
31:7, 242n32

Pesiqta deRav Kahana
4:7, 194–99, 288nn38–39
18:5, 100
11:20, 246n57

Ruth Rabbah
3:4, 246n41

LATE MIDRASHIM

Deuteronomy Rabbah
Va'ethanan
p. 46, 288n31

Numbers Rabbah
19:6, 288n33, 288n39

Midrash Pesiqta Rabbati
14, 288n33

Midrash Tanhuma (Buber)
Hukkat
24, 288n33, 288n35